

# Growing up in East Griqualand

## Reminiscences

by

**Cynthia Payne**

### Introduction



**The Woman – a carving out of yellow-wood by Cynthia Payne**

Cynthia Payne (nee Stanford) was the second of Effie Anderson and Elliot Stanford's six children. She was a granddaughter of Maria Anderson (nee Molteno), and so a great granddaughter of John Charles Molteno. Born in 1917, she grew up on her parents' farm, Inungi, in a remote part of East Griqualand some 30 miles from Kokstad. The farm was situated alongside the great Umzimvubu River ('home of the hippopotamus') and had a wonderful view of Mount Currie. I met Cynthia on only a couple of my visits to South Africa in the 1990s because, sadly, she died very soon after her husband, Ged, passed away at a great age. Cynthia and he were very attached to each other, it seemed to me, and shared many interests as well as a long life together. She and I got on immediately. There were so many points of shared memory, including her Uncle Ernest Anderson whom I recollected at Elgin in his old age. I still can see the bright morning sun shining through a big skylight in the farmhouse of his cousins Ted and Harry Molteno's farmhouse where Ernest lived after retiring to South Africa at the end of the Second World War, and the light picking up the myriad pricks of dust swirling slowly in the air above a pile of Cousin Ernest's unopened *The Lancets*. But,

coming back to Cynthia, and more importantly, there was something about her personality – direct, open, welcoming, interesting, not necessarily conventional – that drew me to her.

She had written out in long hand a number of her recollections a couple of years before I met her. She did it in 1992 by which time she was already 75 years of age. One can only marvel at the precision and detail of her memory, and be thankful. She kindly gave me a copy – altogether she wrote nearly 40,000 words – along with an instruction to use them responsibly. I find her recollections exceptionally interesting for several reasons.

### **Vignettes of members of the family**

One section is devoted to her relations. In it she gives sharp little vignettes of certain members of the family, several of which must have come from her mother Effie's recollections. In one wonderful phrase, Cynthia describes Sir John Charles Molteno, 'the Lion of Beaufort' as he was called, 'hand[ing] down to his family a loud and carrying voice attached to some men of large stature and a large self-importance.' And she goes on to describe his two eldest daughters, Betty and Caroline, as being 'cast in an iron mould and rul[ing] the family with determination and a great knowledge of right.'

But it is her descriptions of those of her relatives whom she actually knew that are the most interesting. She remembers staying with Ted and Harry Molteno in the late 1940s when she was trying to establish herself as a sculptor after her years of active service in the Second World War. Ted was very supportive and helped her financially with the cost of a course. And when she and Ged Payne got married, Ted gave them a railway wagonload of peaches as a wedding present! These Harry and he proceeded to sell on her behalf, and Cynthia told me how the proceeds of this ungainly but huge gift met much of the cost of their first house! Most touching, however, is her picture of Ted and Harry's brilliant, but deeply eccentric brother, Clifford Molteno, to whom they gave a home on their farm at Elgin all his life.

### **Stanfords and Moltenos**

I should make clear the various links between the Molteno and Stanford families. All Elliot and Effie Stanford's descendants are, of course, descendants of Sir John Charles Molteno. Another link resulted from Effie's best friend at St Leonards, Lil Sandeman. Effie and Lil were at this girls' boarding school in Scotland for several years. Effie invited Lil to come out to the Cape in 1905 and she spent six happy months staying with Effie and her widowed father, Tom Anderson. It was during this visit that Lil met and got engaged to Wallace Molteno, with the result that she, like Effie a few years later, also became a farmer's wife in a remote part of the Cape, and the two sets of cousins saw a lot of one another during the summer holidays at Kalk Bay. And in the next generation, Wallace and Lil's eldest son, Donald Molteno, became a close political colleague and friend of Walter Stanford. Both men were Members of the South African Parliament. They were elected by Africans as so-called Native Representatives and burdened with the impossible task of getting the white power structure to pay attention to the suffering and concerns of the vast majority of voiceless South Africans.

## **Growing up on a farm in East Griqualand in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Cynthia grew up on the farm at Inungi in the early 1920s. Because of its remoteness, she was largely educated at home. She did not, therefore, spend large parts of her childhood away at boarding school. This is the second reason why her reminiscences are so interesting. She lived in the last age of the ox-wagon and the horse before lorries and tractors transformed both travel and ways of doing agriculture. Her recollections give a detailed and intimate picture of farm life at that time. The immediate family was central to one's existence. In Cynthia's case, this meant her parents and her five brothers and sisters, but also the cousins 'next door' (that is, several hours away on horseback) – Gordon and Evelyn Murray's daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Gordon was a first cousin of Effie's and was also farming in East Griqualand. And then there were occasional visits by members of the family from far away – her grandfather, Tom Anderson, would come to stay. And every year Effie and the children go and spend a month or two with him at his home in Kalk Bay during the hottest part of the summer.

Black domestic servants and farm workers were also at the centre of this little girl's life. Cynthia often resorts unconsciously in these reminiscences to using the Xhosa word for a plant or foodstuff or whatever. And like her cousin, Mary Murray, who actually had to translate for her father, Cynthia also grew up speaking Xhosa. One gets a sense of there having been considerably less linguistic, and even cultural, distance between black and white South Africans, at least in this part of the country, a hundred years ago compared to the gulf that opened up later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Cynthia Stanford**

The last reason why Cynthia's recollections are so interesting is because of the kind of person she was. She gives a very honest account of what it felt like being a little child – her nightmares, her jealousies, her frustrations, her adventures, and what gave her joy. And when she becomes a young woman, there is the section of her memoirs (not reproduced here) which tells the story of her joining up during the Second World War and becoming a radar operations officer at various postings along the South African coast. These installations tracked German U-boats, and more rarely Japanese naval craft, moving around the tip of Africa.

Cynthia's first love throughout her life was art. It started as a child, as she describes here. She got huge excitement from finding some Bushman (San) rock paintings on the farm. Much later, she took a Fine Arts degree in Natal. She became a sculptor, working in both wood and stone. When I visited her, she had a number of pieces in the small retirement home she and Ged had in Hout Bay – including an amazing two figure sculpture in white stone and a three figure wooden sculpture. They were really lovely and quite the most beautiful work by a member of our family which I have seen. She told me how she used to exhibit and sell her carvings and sculptures. She talked also about how, with the consolidation of the National Party's hegemony over South African life from the 1950s on, the key institution in the South African art world came under the control of a new generation of Afrikaners. They disliked the inspiration she took from indigenous African culture. And they froze her out, she was convinced, and refused to exhibit her work.

**What has been done with this text**

Cynthia gave me her reminiscences in four sections. They were handwritten, and I only had access to a poor photostat. The inevitable consequences have been occasional errors in transcription, difficulties in deciphering particular words (especially proper nouns), and some words actually missing. Also, since the sections are not always very logically organized and there is very occasional repetition, I have altered the sequence of the material rather substantially in order to give the reader a more coherent account. As with all these family diaries and reminiscences, the headings and explanatory footnotes have been inserted by me. There are too few photographs currently, especially there are none of Inungi or of Cynthia and her sisters and brothers. I intend to remedy this on my next trip to South Africa when I will be able to scan photos held by various members of the Stanford family. One last point to mention is that Cynthia probably also wrote about her relatives on the Stanford side of the family, but this section of what she wrote is missing. If anyone has a copy, do get in touch so that we can add it to her recollections here.

**Robert Molteno**

August 2013

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## 1. Childhood Memories

### Earliest impressions

The very small child ran down the stone steps from the house and found herself enclosed in the ephemeral glory of the early morning. The soft light suffused the plants and trees of the garden before her and to the right stood a rose bush bearing a flower of complete perfection, red with diamond dewdrops reflecting the newly risen sun and a scent never before encountered. The child stood entranced, leaning forward to revel in the scent. But this beauty must surely be capable of being totally absorbed and became part of her being – so she ate the rose. A busy mother was quite incapable of comprehending the reason for the desolate weeping of her baby, whose only explanation for her sorrow was that she had eaten the rose and was left with nothing but a bitter taste. This was a lesson never forgotten, that we can never wholly possess beauty; to exist, it must always remain beyond reach.



**Effie Stanford (nee Anderson) –  
Elliot Stanford's wife and Cynthia's  
mother**

Early memories – or not quite memories – remained for life as the roots upon which that child developed, always seeking the unattainable, sometimes almost reaching it, but always knowing that there was something else beyond. Clear memories, of sorrow or joy, could always be recalled to feed [...?], sad or joyful, but those of the shadowy [...?] unrecalable are the source of dreams... Something half comprehended and buried [...?] mind could cause me to have harrowing nightmares. A visit, now vaguely recalled, to the snake park in Port Elizabeth at the age of 2 or 3, was the cause of one of the worst of these – to be shut up in a room, stable or store room, with hundreds of snakes covering the floor and creeping from the rafters and down the walls. This dream vanished in time. Then there was the pursuit by cannibalistic Gub-Gub men who were dressed in monks' habits and appeared at dusk. Had there been a man present to defeat them, all would have been well. After many recurrences of this awful nightmare, my father and uncle were present, and in gay confidence we pursued the Gub-Gub men to underground caves – five miles away on the far side of the river. I knew they had all been killed and was never troubled again. About 50 years later I recalled, at the age of two, sitting listening to my uncle, a Catholic monk,<sup>1</sup> relating to my mother the Romans' pursuit of the Christians into the catacombs. I seem to have confused the 'baddies' with the 'goodies'.

<sup>1</sup> Willie Anderson. He was the much older half-brother of Cynthia's mother, Effie. Tom Anderson's first wife, a Miss Baker, was Willie's mother. Willie was at Christ Church, Oxford in the mid 1890s. He contracted T.B. and spent many years in sanatoriums and seeking a warmer climate. He eventually became a Roman Catholic monk and is buried in the English cemetery in Rome.



### **‘We lived a life without outside contacts’**

We lived a life without outside contacts, seldom visiting our friends as the longer journeys with the cart and horses were not lightly undertaken. Church Sunday, the first in the month, was a regular social gathering, but we as small children were left at home in the care of our beloved nanny, Rose. The service would be followed by a grand dinner with Mr and Mrs Rennie – and an afternoon of tennis was a tradition for many years.

Not having other children to play with, our fun was different from any known now. Listening to the hen cackling as she left her nest, proclaiming her triumph, would lead us to search for the nest, and the discovery of a perfect shaped warm egg can still give me a thrill. We had a donkey, Hoffman, on whom we went for ‘walks’, seated on wickerwork panniers and led or driven by Rose, armed with a long rope and large stick.

### **Learning from Rose— the omnipresent love of God**

Rose was a Seventh Day Adventist and instilled in me an enduring knowledge of the omnipresent love of God. There was nothing that did not belong to his kingdom – the flowers, the trees, and all living creatures – and were to be treated with equal kindness and respect. Thus we spent happy hours lying on the hot red sand of a *donga*<sup>2</sup> watching the tok-tokkie beetles rolling their dung balls down the sandy slopes, or sitting quietly on the flat patches of rotting granite, surrounded by rocks and stones amongst which grew grey green ferns with lovely shapes. The lizards would appear, making a sudden rush after a fly or some other insect, and on the top of the rocks the *goggamannetjies* raised their blue heads to survey their world.

To set out for a walk was fraught with danger. It was impossible to pass the tree by the front gate because there was the terrifying disc harrow inextricably associated with the blasting of holes for the new orchard. Before the explosion one must lie flat behind a bank. But once carried past this hazard, there is the new silver wattle patch in which to play hide-and-seek. This is exciting, to hide and be lost in a forest, but to know if Rose calls ‘Cinty, where are you?’, it is easy to shout back, ‘here am I.’

Rose leaves, but the basis of thought – her approach to life – is always there.

### **A baby is found – ‘in a flower’**

A feeling in the home of some sort of worry. Pa sets off to town and we wait anxiously for his return. Then at last, in the late afternoon, the tired horses arrive with the cart and he has brought Mrs Paddy Kennedy with him. Stoni holds the horses and Pa steps down to assist the large old lady to alight. We – Mother, Sheila and I – stand at the garden gate to welcome her. Then comes a morning when our nursery door opens and at the foot of my cot stands Mrs Paddy, holding in her arms a tiny baby. ‘Where did you find it?’ ‘In a flower’, she replies. And, hastily dressed by Rose, we rush forth to search for

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<sup>2</sup> A dry watercourse, often deeply scoured out of the red laterite South African soil.

more! After ages of searching, the Japanese anemones yield nothing and we have to accept only one new sister.<sup>3</sup>

There is now a strange and bewildering period. I am no longer Rose's darling and my mother tells me I am not her 'baby', and for years a deep uncertainty follows as to whose baby I am.

My uncle, Arthur Stanford, has returned from the War.<sup>4</sup> A new house has been built a mile away, at the bottom of the steep hill. Now we have a cousin to play with, the only boy so far in the family. Still our chief friends are our nurse Mary<sup>5</sup> and Lucy,<sup>6</sup> the cook and ruler of the household. The housemaids are also friends but occupy a lesser position. Lucy's eldest daughter is now old enough to work and so she comes as parlour maid – referred to as 'the Dining Room', but there is something strange about her, apart from an unpleasant smell. The other maids murmur that she has 'a thing', but this means nothing to us until the morning our parents are out riding and she invites us to see her 'thing'. The small back room was rather dark and she leads us in and opens the cupboard door. The 'thing' is black and hairy – coarse hair – and has large shiny eyes. It is crouched in the dark cupboard and starts to raise itself up. I flee in terror, and for the rest of my life am afraid to enter that room.

### Extending the house

We are to have a new nursery as there is no room for three beds in our little room. The blue stone foundations are ready and the wagon brings loads of rocks every day for Big One to build the walls. A hole has been made in the wall of our bedroom for the doorway into the new room. There are two sash windows – one facing the rising sun and the other that gets the midday sun. The roof trusses are ready and will be lifted on to the walls. The 'rounders' have been cut in the bush and brought down to be fixed on the trusses ready for the thatching. The thatch arrives on the women's heads, carried over the mountain from the Yenzela, and the Griqua sawyers have cut the yellow-wood floor boards which have been drying in the thatched kraal. Now it is the turn of the women to collect the wet cow manure to be mixed with soil containing both clay and sand into a wet plaster. They now smear the walls, inside and out, enough layers to make a smooth plastered hut. The room is furnished, two beds for Sheila and me, and the cot which Margaret now inhabits, a yellow-wood chest-of-drawers, and the big table with its plush red tablecloth with exciting tassles round the edges that hang down almost to the floor, creating a wonderful cave.

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<sup>3</sup> Sheila Stanford was the eldest child in the family, born in 1916. Then came Cynthia, born in 1917. In 1920, Margaret was born (which is described here by Cynthia). The three girls were followed by Eleanor Mary 'Tus' (1925), John (1929) and Phillip (1931).

<sup>4</sup> The First World War (1914-18).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Kiwana. See in a page or two.

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Stopela. Cynthia tells us a lot about Lucy later in these *Reminiscences*.



**Effie Stanford (sitting astride) with Marjorie Blackburn, in the Cape, 1925**

Since Rose left, Mary Kiwana has been looking after us. She loves Margaret best because she is the baby. She does not know about lizards and *tok-tokkie* beetles, but she can show us the *sakabula*<sup>7</sup> nests in the grass. Hoffman has died. So now, when we go for picnics to the bathing pool in the washing stream, we ride with Mom on Trumps, Sheila at the back and me at the front with a cushion to sit on. Margaret rides with Dad because she is only a baby. The swimming pool is round and has a little waterfall at the top end where it is very deep. The other end is shallow and the water goes over little stones. This is where we play. On the bank is a willow tree for sitting under for the picnic. Dad and Mum practise diving at the deep end. Above the pool the stream runs down smooth rocks with little pools in between and the banks have ferns hanging over the water. Much higher up is a waterfall.

Mr Rennie has given me a cow because he is my godfather. Stoni went to fetch her. She has a white face like all his cows, but she is grey, not red, so her name is Ngwevushi. She is a very nice cow.

Pa is starting to train Domino; but he is still very wild and is having to learn to lead. Sheila and I sat on top of the kraal wall to watch while Mom and Dad were teaching him. He was jumping about a lot and Dad told Dolfus, who has just come to work for us, to take us off the wall. He lifted us down and walked away. Sheila went across the road and then suddenly shouted, 'Run, run'. I saw a black head rearing above the kraal wall and ran as fast as I could. But Domino jumped over and got tangled in the barbed

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<sup>7</sup> The long-tailed widow bird.

wire round the kraal. He didn't land on me but got mixed up in the wire and dragged me to the front of the kraal, where we both came onto the wire. I saw Dad jump over the gate. The wire cut me in lots of places, but the worst was the corner of my mouth. Soon the new big stone kraal will be ready. It is being built of very big blue stones and will have a roof on one side. Nothing will be able to jump over those walls. Domino and I are both three years old.

## **Storms**

The trees in the new orchard are bearing very well and the peaches are the best to eat. But one day a terrible storm started to come over the mountain and Mom and Dad ran to pick the peaches that were nearly ripe. Sheila and I stayed on the *stoep*. Then the great wind that rushes in front of storms rushed in. Sheila screamed, 'Look, look' and the willow tree beside the dairy blew over and squashed the dairy hut flat. It was not a nice hut because there were holes in the bottom of the walls and there were toads in them and once it was a ringhals.<sup>8</sup>

## **Afraid of the dark**

Sheila is afraid of the dark. One evening it was almost quite dark, and she wanted to go to the little-house. Mom said she must go by herself and she would hold the candle in the nursery window, so she need not be afraid. But each time she got to the corner of the privet hedge, she was afraid to go on and ran back. Mom said she must learn to be brave and at last she got there. But this has not made her any braver in the nights. When her nose bleeds, I have to go to Mom's room to fetch a hanky. It is a long way, through our old room that we call the Next Room into the passage, and not get mixed up in the coats that hang there if I go too far, or in the table with the tennis rackets if I turn too soon. Mom's door is always held open with a shoe, so she and Dad can hear if we shout.

Sheila has other night troubles too. If she wants a chamber, I have to get it and put it on the bed for her, because she says she is afraid to get out. Her worst night trouble is when she wakes me up because the 'flying skunks' are coming in at the window and will bite us. She puts her head under the blanket. The noise makes me afraid too, so I run with my hands in front of my face and shut the windows. At least they started their noise before Mom and Dad had gone to bed. So I ran to the dining room and said they must come and listen so they will know they really are flying skunks, and not laugh at us. They came to our room and listened at the window. Dad laughed and said that it was only the jackals hunting and they were really quite far away.

## **Strange noises at dawn – a world white with snow**

One morning we wake, and the noise of the cows lowing sounds very strange and there are sudden cracks of breaking branches. We run to the window and pull up the blind. The whole world has changed in the night and all is white with snow. It is spilling over the tops of the tubs of hydrangeas. The snow is very deep and Mom and Dad get their skis out from the box they have been stored in, and every day they go skiing. We sometimes stand on the skis behind Dad and slide down, but mostly we slide on the sledge. One day Dad decides to inspan Peter to the sledge and we all get on at the front gate and start down the hill to the kraal. Dad is holding the reins and Mom is behind him. It is a very bumpy and we all

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<sup>8</sup> A poisonous South African snake that spits its venom.

fall off except Sheila, who gets left holding the reins and shrieking that she can't stop Peter. And then she falls off too. After that we don't do that kind of tobogganing.

Then one day all the snow slides off the roof and we can't get out of the house! Sheila finds a hole for us to crawl through and the 'boys'<sup>9</sup> come with spades and make a passage to the front gate. A man comes to mend the telegraph line which goes from Cape Town to Bombay. But the snow is much too deep and he cannot get up the mountain. So he learns to ski too. Afterwards they had to bring new telegraph poles because a lot of them had snapped in half up on the mountain.

Our feet get very cold in the snow. We are up above the rocky ridge behind the house. So Mom tells us to go home. Sheila is helping Margaret and I am in front. Then suddenly I fall through the snow and find



**Carol Molteno, 1925 (about four years after she stayed with her cousin, Effie Stanford, at Inungi)**

myself in a cave with rock on one side and snow all around, and impossible to get out. It is beautiful – and a strange light. I am not afraid. Sheila and Margaret do a good shouting and Dad comes to save me. He lies on the snow on top of the rock and pulls me out. It's an exciting adventure. Sheila and Margaret wish that they had fallen through too. There was another snowstorm late that year.

Mom's cousin, Carol Molteno, came on a visit.<sup>10</sup> She had just left school and was visiting us and the Murrays at Cedarville. Jumping into bed with her in the mornings was fun, but she asked funny questions, like what I would do if Pa died. When I gave the obvious answer, 'Bury him in the rose garden', which we did with all the bones we found, she told Mom that I was a very heartless child!

We took Carol to Cedarville, starting very early in the morning. We outspanned for breakfast, like we always did, at Padda River, where there were nice picnic places on the rocks and water for the horses. There was a bundle of oats tied on the back of the cart for the horses. From there it was a long pull to the top of Strydberg<sup>11</sup> and rather stony in places. From the top there was a lovely view over the Cedarville Flats to the Little Berg and then the line of the Drakensberg. In the winter the air was crystal clear and the

<sup>9</sup> This is a term that White South Africans often used when referring to Black farm workers.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Williamson (nee Molteno) describes the visit in her *Reminiscences*, also reproduced on this website.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, 'Struggle Mountain'. What an evocative name for a mountain that must indeed have been a real sweat to get over!



shadows keen and blue. The grass was red and gold from the frosted *rooigras*. The horses could trot a lot of the way from there.

Just beyond the bridge over the Umzimvubu [River] was a farm with big trees and a flock of turkeys. At the next farm there was a small round muddy dam, and there we saw a pig having a bathe. I think it was wearing a black and white striped bathing costume, but perhaps it was only muddy! The old road to Franklin went down past the house and crossed the river at a drift. This cut off a long loop round to the bridge. As we were getting there, the Post Cart came racing along and turned off on the old road and plunged across the river. Its four horses looked very grand trotting so fast.

### **Cousins 'nearby' – Uncle Gordon and Evie Murray's family**

Uncle Gordon Murray was our mother's cousin. He and Aunt Evie had two daughters – Mary was older than us and Elizabeth almost the same age as Sheila.<sup>12</sup> When we went visiting them, we stayed several days as 25 miles was a long day's pull for the horses. Sheila used to get cart sick and often had to stand in front of Mom so that she could be sick over the dashboard and Dad would not have to stop. She was worst on the long slope down from the top of Strydberg when the horses were trotting fast, their feet making a lovely click clock click clock noise on the hard red road.



**Mary, sitting on mielie bags at Greenfields, her parents Gordon and Evelyn Murray's farm in East Griqualand, Summer 1914**

Now no longer can I fly out of the window and float above the garden and the orchard, over the kraal, and down to circle over Trollips huts – the world mysterious in white moonlight. It has become more

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<sup>12</sup> Mary Gordon Murray had been born in 1911; her sister, Elizabeth Molteno 'Tiger' Murray, in 1915.

and more difficult to rise up in the air and only by running hard can I leap up and float over the big white rose bush in the middle of the lawn. Perhaps my body has become too heavy or perhaps my being is weighted down with more knowledge of earthly things. All my life I could still run, floating in huge strides and almost flying at a great speed until now I am weighted to the Earth.

Every evening, as we eat our evening porridge at the nursery table, Mom reads to us. Stories of all kinds. But those she reads in German I do not like.<sup>13</sup> I am upset by all the little goats being eaten by the wolf, but I am also sorry that the wolf is cut open with scissors to save the kids, and the stones weigh him down so that he drowns. Grimms' Märchen are not really kind stories. I like best Squirrel Nutkin and Mrs Tigglywinkle. The poem of the Earl Koenig I like – it is terrible and frightening, but it is wildly mysterious. Mom recites it to me often when I ask her to.

I remember once there came a great rumbling noise and the house shook and the roof made a great rattling. Margaret ran fast to Mom who was sewing on her machine, and shouted that Uncle Arthur was driving over the roof in his motor car. Mom said it was only an earthquake and had gone away. Earthquakes did not often happen.

### **Trip to Cape Town – only a thousand miles**

One morning we are up very early and dressed in the new clothes Mom has been sewing. We are going to spend the day with Mr and Mrs Rennie. But when we get to the turn off to the long avenue to their house, Mom says that we have come so far and it is still early, we might as well go to Kokstad. This is a great excitement as we have not often been to a town. At last we drive into Kokstad, but then Dad says that, as we have come so far, we might as well go on to Franklin. We're a bit tired now, but greet the new plan excitedly. Dad outspans the horses at Kangs Post where there is a nice big stream and trees. Luckily Mom has brought a picnic. And the horses have a feed of oats from the bundle tied on the back of the cart. After resting for a couple of hours, Dad inspans again and in the afternoon we are quite near Franklin when, to our surprise, we see Riempie and his leader with the Scotch cart pulled by four oxen. It is loaded with a trunk and suitcases. Mom is quite excited about this bit of luck, and says that we should continue to Cape Town! Then our excitement is really great and we don't feel tired at all from bumping along in the cart.

At Franklin we find Aunt Evie with Elizabeth and Mary. Dad and Uncle Gordon stay behind, but the rest of us catch the train to Maritzburg and stop over at the Norfolk Hotel. This is a grand place with a children's dining room with two of the most beautiful pictures of fruit, looking more lovely than any fruit we have ever eaten – purple plums and ripe peaches and apricots and figs. They are all perfect shapes. The bathrooms are down the passage and then down some steps. Sheila and Elizabeth leave the tap on, and there is water everywhere. The two ladies who run the hotel are very angry and give us cloths and say we must mop up all the water. Mary is very angry too and doesn't want to mop.

Then we go to the station again and catch another train to Durban. From the station there are rickshaws with Zulu men pulling them. They have horns on their heads to look like oxen, and jump in the air as they run along to the docks. Here we go up the stairs onto the ship. It smells horrid. In fact, the smell of the ship made me sick before we even left harbour! Mom says it is the bilge water. Sheila is frightened

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<sup>13</sup> Effie's father, Tom Anderson, had sent her to a finishing school in Europe after she had completed her schooling at St Leonards in Scotland.

and cries because the cranes are loading a train engine on to the ship and she thinks it is so heavy the ship will sink.

The cabins are small rooms with a door with a hook that rattles and a heavy dark curtain that swings when the ship moves. I get sick but Sheila does not. The ship makes funny noises as it rolls about. In the morning a stewardess brings apples on a plate. This makes me think that I will never eat an apple again. At East London the ship lays off the shore all day, rocking about, while tugs bring lighters with cargo to be swung by the derrick onto the ship and into the huge hold.

In the evening we go on again and next day we come to Port Elizabeth. There are the tugs and the lighters again. A tug comes out and, dressed in our best dresses, we are lowered in a big basket by a derrick that picks it up and drops us into the tug. When there are enough people in the tug, we go to the jetty and sailors help us up. I was terrified as I could see the water down below between the planks and was sure I would fall through. I stand still and Mom has to carry me.



ALGOA BAY AND PORT ELIZABETH, FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE

*Photo by Wilson Abardan*

### **Port Elizabeth overlooking Algoa Bay, late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

There is a cousin, one of Dad's I think, to meet us (Jo or Charlie Berry), and we go in a cab to see Great Granny up a very steep hill where the horses' hooves slip on the cobbles and make sparks because they are shod with iron shoes. Great Granny lives in a house with stairs called Hamilton House. We are very excited that it is double-storyed and these are the first stairs I remember. Great Granny wears a black Victorian dress, high white lace collar, and a black cap on her head. She has a chair near the window. There is another big lady in a black dress and a green parrot in a cage. Perhaps this was a great aunt.



Next day the ship came to Mossel Bay, and loading took place again. On the fifth morning we see the mountains and come into the docks at Cape Town. Grandpa is there to meet us and [we take] another cab to the station, and then the train to Kalk Bay.<sup>14</sup>

It was on this trip that our Uncle Ernest Anderson returned with us on an 'Intermediate', and not the Mail Boat. It was a pretty bad ship. Uncle Ernest got food poisoning – which put him in a poor mood for the rest of the trip. I remember as we finally drove home in the dark from Franklin, Sheila chatted happily and finally asked why the stars twinkled. Uncle Ernest said despairingly, 'Can she never stop?'



**Cynthia Stanford's uncles – Col. Ernest Anderson (doctor in the Horse Guards) and Harold Anderson (farmer at Norval's Pont on the Orange River), 1950s**

There was one return trip later on when there was no one to meet us at Franklin. Charlie Jones from Cedarville was about to take us in his car when Brick arrived with his car which he used as a taxi. He had been delayed by a puncture. We were to be taken by him to a road nearest to home on the Cedarville

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<sup>14</sup> Effie's father, Tom Anderson, lived now at Quarterdeck, a cottage above the little fishing harbour of Kalk Bay on the False Bay Coast. This was about 15 miles from the centre of Cape Town, but linked to it by the Suburban Railway. Beaufort Cottage was the original holiday home Cynthia's greatgrandfather, John Charles Molteno, had bought back in the 1880s or thereabouts.

road – it was the Poortjie road. We had not gone far when we ran over a baby donkey. Fortunately, it was not much damaged and ran off. What excitement when we saw our cart and four horses at last waiting at the side of the road!

## Kalk Bay



**Beaufort Cottage, Kalk Bay (the Molteno holiday home), a generation or before Effie Stanford and her children stayed there in the 1920s**

This is a lovely place. We stay at Beaufort Cottage which is below Quarterdeck where Grandpa lives. It is on the edge of the road and we can hear the horses trotting past with people's carts – the noise of the fish cart when it comes blowing its horn,<sup>15</sup> from the fishing harbour. On the other side of the road is the railway line. We go under this by the subway to get to the beach and the swimming pool. The way down under the subway is steep and made of clinkers,<sup>16</sup> and we slide down.

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<sup>15</sup> Coloured fishermen would unload their catch on the quay at Kalk Bay from where horse and carts would hawk the fish round the suburbs of Cape Town. This continued right into the 1950s and I can still remember the evocative, penetrating sound of the fishermen's horns alerting householders to the arrival of the morning's catch.

<sup>16</sup> Coal cinders were a cheap way of providing a rough and ready surface. Near where I grew up on the Cape Flats what we knew as the Cinder Track led across the sand for half a mile to Princess Vlei.



The pool is shallow at the edge and little waves make patterns in lines in the sand. There is a rock on one side where we can jump in. Every day we go to the beach to swim. We have a bathing box where we can get dressed. We can lie on the sand on the beach, but it is a bit black from the smoke and coal from the trains going past. Grandpa comes early every morning to say good morning. He wears a dressing gown and carries his sponge. Aunt Ellen<sup>17</sup> lives with Grandpa. She sits in the long sitting-room and makes lace. She has a magnifying glass. I am very much afraid of her and cannot go in to say good morning. Sheila is not afraid and Margaret goes in and says 'Ullo Ellen', but I cannot go in and this makes Mom angry. So she has to beat me every morning to make me go in. Then I run in and say 'Good morning' and run out again very fast.

The kitchen at Beaufort Cottage is down some stairs from the dining room and there Minna lives and cooks very nice food, only we do not like the porridge as it is white mealie meal or oatmeal.<sup>18</sup> Minna makes puddings – bread and butter and queen pudding, and other puddings we have never eaten before. She also cuts thin white bread and butter and rolls it like sausages. There is meat every day for dinner.



**Thomas J. Anderson, Cynthia Stanford's grandfather (portrait taken when he was a lot younger than when Cynthia would have known him)**

One day Dad arrives. Minna finds pictures in the newspaper of Father Christmas, so we get very excited and know Christmas is coming soon. The night before Christmas Mom and Dad go up to Quarterdeck and leave us alone. There is a loud knocking at the door. Sheila and I know it is Father Christmas, but we are afraid to let him in. So we tell Margaret to go because she is too small to know about being afraid. She takes a long time to get the door open and keeps shouting to Father Christmas to wait, she is coming. At last the door is open and we all look to see, but it is not Father Christmas, it is Uncle Clifford with a long moustache. When Mom comes back, she laughs a lot that we had made a funny mistake.

Sheila got a Jack-in-a-box which we liked very much. But when we were going home in the train from Maritzburg to Franklin, it was going up a steep hill near Deep Dale and the Jack jumped out of his box and out of the train window. Mom said he would be happy with the black children who were watching the train.

<sup>17</sup> Aunt Ellen was Tom Anderson's widowed sister.

<sup>18</sup> Presumably much less tasty than what Cynthia and her sisters were used to on the farm.

## Staying with Uncle Arthur and Aunt Eily Stanford

Uncle Arthur and Aunt Eily have three children. Dickie is a bit younger than Margaret, and now there is a new baby called Naomi. She was born just after the big snow; so her other name is Nokepu (snow). They have a nurse called Margaret who had been Aunt Eily's nurse. She is very fierce and has a big stick. But luckily she is fat and cannot run fast when we are naughty.

At the back of their house is a place where the sods were cut out for building the house and in the summer it gets full of water. But it is too muddy for bathing. Instead we took the big tin bath and made it a boat. It was a good boat but difficult to steer and rather wobbly. Uncle Arthur came to see what we were doing and wanted to sail too. So he got into the bath. But when he got into the middle of the pool, the boat sank and he was covered in mud and water. We laughed very much, but ran away because he was feeling fierce.

We went to spend the day with Uncle Arthur because Mom and Pa had gone to town. It was raining a lot and when it stopped Mary took Margaret home because it was the suppertime.<sup>19</sup> Sheila and I waited to go home in the cart. It got late and then it was dark and we felt as if we were lost. Uncle Arthur stood on the *stoep* with us and said, 'If you look where the road comes over the hill above the silo pit, you will see the lantern that hangs between the front horses.' When it was very late and still no lantern had come, we had to go to bed in the spare room. There was a big bed that Uncle Arthur had made. The mattress was filled with dried mealy husks and it was a very bumpy and rattled when we moved. I cried because I thought Mom and Pa were lost and were never coming to find us again. In fact, Mom and Dad had tried to come home, but the roads were very wet and the clay was slippery. When they got to the steep hill past the church, the horses fell flat each time they tried to pull the cart up. They had to outspan and ride the horses to Mr Rennie's house and sleep there for the night. Mom then began to get asthma. So Dad took Wasp and rode home – it was 10 miles to fetch her medicine. Only Margaret was at home. She was sleeping in a cot and Mary was sleeping on the mat beside her. It was nearly morning when Dad got back to Mom with the medicine. Mr Rennie sent some oxen to pull the cart up the hill after breakfast. And they came to fetch us to go home.

## No easy ride – Uncle Gordon and Aunt Evie Murray try to visit

Uncle Gordon and Aunt Evie came with Mary and Elizabeth. It was summer. And often in the summer the Umzimvubu was in flood. When the time came for them to leave, the river was very full and they had to cross by the box. Aunt Evie and Mary and Elizabeth went across in the box with some of the 'boys' taking a long rope of *riems*.<sup>20</sup> Uncle Gordon had heard that carts float. So they tied the *riems* to the *disselboom*<sup>21</sup> and started to pull it across. But the cart turned upside down and only the wheels could be seen, and then nothing, as it went away downstream and sank. Uncle Gordon did not often look anxious, but this time he looked very worried. The 'boys' on the other side pulled hard. At last the wheels appeared coming up towards the drift and bouncing on the hood. After this we always tied the cart on the pulleys on the cable<sup>22</sup> and pulled it across in the proper way, as we had always done.

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<sup>19</sup> This was quite close by since Arthur and Elliot Stanford were farming opposite ends of Inungi.

<sup>20</sup> The complications of crossing the Umzimvubu are explained in great detail later on in Cynthia's reminiscences. *Riems* were home-made leather thongs and ropes used for all sorts of purposes.

<sup>21</sup> The wagon shaft.

<sup>22</sup> Presumably a steel cable!



**Evelyn 'Aunt Evie' Murray spinning wool on the farm at Greenfields, East Griqualand**

they would be able to get out.<sup>23</sup> Dad was once making a visitor's horses get in and they were running out when he let them go. He held them one on each side of him and said, 'Come on, you devils'. They heard this. So they squeezed him between them and then plunged out with him. He had to go quite far across with them.

Sheila's birthday is in April, which is the time when there are no eggs. There was always a great searching to find eggs to make her birthday cake, and then sometimes the eggs were old and went off with a bang and a terrible smell. Lucy used to say the hens will lay again when the mealies come in. The mealies come in June and are put in a big heap, golden and smelling of new mealies. This is when we children have to do our work. We must sit on top of the heap and sort out all the best mealies – big ones with the rows quite straight and a yellow colour. We throw them into a small heap on one side and these are the seed mealies to plant next year.

It was very exciting when Mr Olivier arrived with the thrashing machine. He liked children and used to hold our hands while the great machine was working – the steam engine turning the belt. The cobs are all put in a heap at the side and the mealies<sup>24</sup> in sacks are stacked in the big storeroom. The shelled cobs are called *amaqopu* and are used to light the stove and the fire in the dining room. They burn faster than wood.

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<sup>23</sup> The horses would be swept downstream as they swam across the river and would only be able to get out where the banks shelved down at the drift.

<sup>24</sup> i.e. The mielie grains, or *mieliepitte*, that have been stripped off the cob and are ready to be ground into meal.

We went to Cedarville for a visit and brought back a visitor, Gwen Blackman. She is not a relation. We also brought a 'settler' who had come to learn to farm. He rode on Uncle Gordon's horse, Ginger. Ginger liked to gallop, but Mr Butler did not understand that horses must not gallop many miles. He went far in front and had to wait for the cart. Then Dad told him to take the short-cut by Driefontein and to follow the spoor of the police horse which was shod. He did not know what this spoor looked like and it was very late when he arrived and Ginger was nearly dead. He was Irish and did not like our kind of farming very much, so he went back to Ireland. Dad said he was not much good anyway, but he did go to Kokstad and bought me a beautiful moonstone and silver brooch for my sixth birthday.

### **Painting – my very first experience**

Gwen Blackman was an artist and painted beautiful pictures with watercolours. This I now know was the thing I wanted to do most in the world. After she left, Mom gave me a box of paints and a book for painting. I painted a lot of the time. My pictures were not as good as Gwen's, but this did not dissuade me from my determination to be an artist

Aunt Eily has another baby. She is fat and is called Bodjoo and her other name is *Nokitika* (the snowing), because she was born in a snowstorm one night. Margaret, their nurse, has to have someone to help her with so many children. So Topi comes to help; she is Margaret's grandchild and is very young to be working. Uncle Arthur has a terrible ram called David. He is nearly as tall as me and chases us and knocks us over. Topi was walking one day carrying Bodjoo who is heavy, and David came from behind and knocked Topi over and stamped on her. Uncle Arthur makes us chase David out of the garden, but it is really the other way round. Aunt Eily has grown so many strawberries they have to be picked in the tin bath.

### **Learning to ride**

Dad says it is time I must learn to ride by myself. I am sure I will fall off because when Mom put us on Wasp to go with her to take tea to Dad who was making silage at the old silage pit, she let Wasp go while she shut the concertina gate and he cantered away with us. I was at the back and fell off first, and Sheila held on to the front of the saddle, so she fell off second. Mom laughed very much. Another time I was riding Wasp to the front gate and he cantered back with me and stopped suddenly when he came to the saddle store and I fell off and Alec caught me. Dad takes me on Domino on a leading rein up to the big camp and makes me canter and catches me when I try to fall off. After that I could ride by myself.

### **Home schooling – The 'ups' and downs of learning to read**

Mom is teaching us to read and write. I know about ABC and how to write all the letters. We have a reading book with pictures of children in long dresses playing on a swing. I do not know why 'UP' means up. The book says, 'UP I go'. I can read 'I' and 'go', but not 'UP'. Mom gets very cross because, when I see 'UP', it isn't like 'up', so each time I can't read it. Mom beats me and now I will always know that 'UP' says 'up'. I'm glad I can read. She teaches us sums, too, which is not so difficult as 'UP'!



### Another summer holiday at Kalk Bay

We're going to Cape Town again. But this time we will spend a night with Aunt Alice and Uncle Alec at Weltevrede<sup>25</sup> because, from there, there is a short cut to Franklin, not through Kokstad but up over the



**Kalk Bay – heavy seas breaking over the jetty, January 1930**

mountain. We leave early in the morning and the horses have a very long pull up, having to stop and rest sometimes. On top of the mountain, it is nearly flat with one gate. As we come to the gate, there is a man who runs to open it and it is Wolpad, who is Mary's son. He is coming home from his holiday at Deep Dale where Mary comes from. He had caught the train to Franklin and was walking back to work by the short cut. We were very surprised to see him.

I think it was the *Balmoral Castle* we sailed on this time, and it smelt just as much as the other ship. Aunt Evie said it was just my imagination when I was sick even before the ship left Durban Bay. When we came back, there was no one to meet us at Franklin and Mom was upset. Mr Jones said he would take us in his car<sup>26</sup> although he was going to Cedarville. But just as we were getting ready to start, Mr Brick arrived with his car which is a taxi. He had come to fetch us to go to where Dad was meeting us on the Cedarville Road at Poortjie. Mr Brick was late to meet us because he had had a puncture. Then there

<sup>25</sup> This is Afrikaans for 'well satisfied'.

<sup>26</sup> This is now the mid 1920s, and motor cars were just becoming a little more common.

were some donkeys on the road and a foal ran in front of the car and got run over. Luckily the car was high off the ground and the donkey got out from under and ran away.

This time while we were in Cape Town, Dad came and stayed with us at Beaufort Cottage. He liked to put on his suit and go to town to visit with his lawyer friends, especially Bill Schreiner.<sup>27</sup> I was learning to swim and had water wings that went under the arms and over the chest. I was in the middle of the pool when the wings slipped back under my tummy and I could not get my head up out of the water. Luckily Dad had come to the beach before catching the train to town. He had to jump in and pull me out. This did great damage to his best clothes!

Dad had other friends called St Leger who lived at Muizenberg in a big house. Sheila and I had to go to tea with their children. Mum took us on the train and left us there. It was very strange. Their children were older than me and very tidy. They had a nursery with a table and a white tablecloth, and a nanny and cook, who were not black at all,<sup>28</sup> and they sat at opposite ends of the table and told us all the time how to behave nicely, to eat the bread-and-butter first, and say 'Scuse fingers' when we passed things to each other. There was a girl whose name I have forgotten, it may have been Pamela. When Mom was taking us home, she asked if we had behaved nicely. We said, 'Yes', in very polite voices, and then Sheila said, 'But Pamela didn't'. Mum asked what she did and Sheila said, in a polite voice, 'She laughed'. Mom did too. I don't think we stayed so polite for very long.

We used to play with our cousins on the beach. They were mostly older than us – Donald and Amy and Teddy.<sup>29</sup> Jocelyn was the same age as me and we played together a lot. She was very beautiful – plump with fair hair and blue eyes. We were skinny and I had brown eyes and brown hair, which was not pretty at all, even if it was curly.

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<sup>27</sup> William Schreiner, brother of Olive Schreiner, the South African writer, had been Prime Minister of the Cape for a short time many years earlier.

<sup>28</sup> Even as late as the 1920s, some better off white South Africans still employed one or two white domestic servants. But this sight is something Cynthia has not encountered before.

<sup>29</sup> These were Wallace and Lil Molteno's children – Donald, Joan ('Amy'), Edward ('Teddy') and Jocelyn. Lil was a close friend of Cynthia's mother, Effie; they had been at school together in Scotland. Lil used to escape the heat of the Karoo and spend much of the summer at their holiday home at Kalk Bay, which was very near to where Effie and her children were staying.





**Joan ('Amy'), Edward and Donald Molteno, c. 1913**

When I was 7 years old, Rita and Michael Trubshaw came from England to visit the Rennies. We went to church on Sunday. They asked Mom if they could come and stay with us because Michael (he was called Arthur but that was a muddle with our uncle) had grown too fast. It was called 'outgrowing his strength'. He was very tall and skinny with long thin legs. Rita had a violin, but she didn't play on it. They liked to ride, but didn't know that horses must never gallop towards home. Mr Rennie had to buy a horse for Michael. It came at last and he was very sad because it was a Kafir pony with pigeon toes and only about 13 hands high, so his legs nearly touched the ground. And it could not jump over a hurdle very well, or gallop wildly across the veld. He was vaulting onto it bareback one day and leapt too high and went over the top onto his head on the other side. We couldn't help laughing – which made him very angry.

## The great flood

This was the year of the great flood. It rained most days for about six weeks and the river flooded over into the mealie lands and the whole river valley turned into a lake. The box could not cross because it went underwater. So only by swimming could anyone cross. Rita and Michael had to go back to England on a ship. The week before they were going, the river dropped enough for Fanie van Niekerk's pont<sup>30</sup> that he had made, to get across. Pa said they must send all their luggage quickly to go across and be loaded on a wagon on the other side with sails to cover everything. He said they could keep only one lot of clothes and a toothbrush and brush and comb so that they could swim if the river rose. When the day came to leave, the river was right up in flood again. Then Pa said to get ready and we would go to the pont and see if it was possible to cross. But they brought a whole lot of suitcases, their gramophone, the violin, and a hatbox from their rooms. Pa was furious and had to inspan the Scotch cart to carry all this luggage. He took them and Mom in the cart to the van Niekerks. We went in the Scotch cart.

The river was a huge brown flood and the pont had got loose and was out in the middle. The van Niekerks were there, as well as the policeman from the police station. But no one had a plan. Then Pa said he would try to get the pont. They tied *riems* round his waist and he went up the bank and started to swim. When he got to the pont, he got swept past because he could not hold on and the silly people with the *riems* pulled so hard he got pulled under and they nearly drowned him. Mom was furious. He tried once more, but it was no good. We all went home and Pa went on to Uncle Arthur's and said it was now his turn to try. He went to the big drift where the box was under the water. He had to swim across with his clothes on his head, and walk to Lourens's to borrow a horse and ride to Kokstad to arrange for Mr Brick to take his taxi to Cedarville bridge. Next day the Trubshaws left on horses with all the girls and women<sup>31</sup> walking behind with the luggage on their heads to go up the path between the mountain and the river. It was a very up-and-down path and a very long way. Michael wanted to be a soldier in the Horse Guards but you can read about that in David Niven's book *The Moon's a Balloon*. We were sad when they left because Rita used to play new games with us.

Our youngest sister, Eleanor, was born in April.<sup>32</sup> So now we were four girls. Sheila and I had to take it in turns to ride behind the cart on Budge when we went out.

## Making our own toys

We learnt to make animals from clay. There was lots of clay in the streams, and we found out which was the best. Sheila, Walter<sup>33</sup> and I went every day to pick clay. We made farms on the floor of the outside hut. They laughed at me because I wanted to make my animals look like real animals, not just the same as all the other black children made them. We made a big elephant at the stream and had great difficulty carrying it home.

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<sup>30</sup> i.e. Pontoon.

<sup>31</sup> Cynthia means the women farm workers and their children.

<sup>32</sup> This makes the date 1925.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Stanford, Arthur and Eily's son, and so a first cousin of Cynthia's.

## No ordinary children's illnesses

In the winter I got very sick from dysentery. Dr Hickley had to come and see me when he came to his clinic on Fridays. I think I nearly died more from starvation than dysentery. He said I could only eat nutri[...] or maizena made with milk, and it made me sick. I can't think why no one knew that milk is the worst thing for dysentery. After that I would only drink *amasi*,<sup>34</sup> and not raw milk and cream which made me sick. Then the spring came and I got better.

But it was my bad year because, as we were walking to the swimming pool, something bit me on my foot. The next day Sheila and I had to walk to have our piano lesson with Aunt Eily. My foot was sore and when we got to the steep hill, I sat down and said I couldn't go any further. Sheila said it was pretty grand for a skinny little thing like me to have a foot much bigger than hers or Walter's, and if we did not go to our lesson, we might get a beating. We made a plan that I would have first lesson and pretend to bump my foot, and then say, 'Ouch'. And when Aunt Eily asked why, I could show her my foot with the purple blister on one side. We got to their house and Aunt Eily saw at once that I could scarcely walk. She said it was a blister and pricked it with a needle, and washed it in Lysol. But nothing came out. Uncle Arthur took me home in his motor car. Dr Mary Hickley came and said to put my foot and leg in very hot salt water. But I got worse and my head and eyes were terrible. The next day I could not see any more, only grey shadows. And when I told the doctor that my eyes were very sore, she said I must not read! I was angry that she was so stupid, and did not tell her I was blind! At last one day I could read 'Laurel Paraffin' on the paraffin box cupboard beside my bed, and next day the smaller writing that said '4 Imp. Gal.'.

## 1924 – the train arrives at Kokstad

Then we went to Cape Town. This time we went all the way by train. We did not spend the night at the Norfolk Hotel, only the day. The railway line to Kokstad and the other branch to Matatiele were opened in 1924. So there was no longer any need for the long 40-mile trip to Franklin and catching the train to Maritzburg, or for the wagons loaded with the wool-clip to set out on the long trek. From then on we went by train to Cape Town on several occasions. This I much preferred as there were things to look at out of the windows and I did not have to spend five days being seasick.

The extension of the line to Kokstad, by the way, was followed by years of debate over the route the line was to take to link up with Umtata or Maclear. It never was.

[Some 2 years later]

## Cape Town – doing the rounds of the family

Mom asked Mary to accompany us. She joined the train in the dark at Deep Dale, having gone ahead to see her family. She always looked such a wonderful lady in her long black skirt and a pure white apron, and she wore a silk *doek* arranged in high folds. Now Aunt Ellen had died, so we stayed at Quarterdeck. Mary took Eleanor (nicknamed Tus by Sheila) to the beach every morning, and she or Mom used to put her in the warm rock pools to play. We learned to swim quite well in the pool – now called Dalebrook

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<sup>34</sup> Fermented milk, a traditional Southern African way of drinking and storing milk safely.

(much enlarged and spoilt). The railway line was being made double track and electrified – which made the beach smaller, but it was no longer grey from the steam engines.

Jocelyn and the rest of her family arrived soon after we did. Now my longing to be fat and fair became my night-time dreaming of heaven. The aunts – Mom's cousins Lillian and Grace Blackburn – came to spend the day and were brought to the beach to meet us. We were in the pool and came out to greet them, but I met with a terrible setback. Aunt Grace burst into loud laughter and said, 'Oh Effie, it looks



**Lady Sobella 'Minnie' Molteno, Sir  
John Charles Molteno's last wife, late  
19<sup>th</sup> century**

like a famine child'. Despite an enormous holiday appetite, I did not become fat! And my nightly prayer to become the fattest girl on the beach was never answered! (I much preferred going to Cape Town by train. It was much quicker and did not involve five days of being sick on a ship.) Uncle Ernest came again to stay.

We had to go to parties at the Beards' and Buchanans' houses. There were lots of children who all knew each other and I was too shy to speak and didn't know how to play with them. Then there was a large table with masses of iced cakes, which I liked, but there was this awful stuff called jelly. It was slippery and bouncy in the mouth, and neither Sheila nor I could swallow it – it bounced back. Helpful mothers would lean over me and say, 'Eat your lovely jelly, dear'. It was very embarrassing. But I could not eat the jelly and nor could Sheila. It would have made us sick. These parties were a great trial to us each time we went to Cape Town.

We went to Elgin in a train to stay with Uncle Harry<sup>35</sup> and with Aunt Marjorie [Blackburn] on her and her husband's new fruit farm.<sup>36</sup> They had built a big new house and pack sheds and were making a garden. There were big oak trees. They had one daughter, Elizabeth, who was a bit younger than Margaret, but she was rather strange. Afterwards we knew she was a Mongol child. She had a lady to look after her and a little cart and pony that we went for picnics in.

We went to Gordon's Bay<sup>37</sup> to visit Great Aunt Minnie and Aunt Minnie. Great Aunt Minnie was Sir John Charles Molteno's third wife. So she was not our great grandmother. Uncles Ted, Clifford, and Harry

<sup>35</sup> Harry Molteno, Cynthia's uncle, whom she got to know well when, as a young adult, she stayed with him and Ted at Elgin after the Second World War.

<sup>36</sup> Eikenhof, the fruit farm Harry and Marjorie Blackburn bought. It is today much expanded and part of a large fruit-growing enterprise.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon's Bay was a little seaside village at the eastern end of False Bay at this time. Lady Molteno settled there after she returned from some years spent in England.

were her sons, and little Aunt Minnie her daughter. The sitting room was rather dark and had a big sofa with a table at the end of it. Mom was feeding Margaret, who was still a baby,<sup>38</sup> while Sheila and I played climbing on the table and jumping onto the big soft sofa. It was Sheila's turn to jump. She took a good jump and landed on Great Aunt Minnie's head. We had not seen her come in and sit down while we were busy climbing onto the table. Sheila got a bad fright and screamed very loud. So I screamed too. Aunt Minnie had a very deep voice and a moustache, and kept saying, 'There, there' and trying to pick Sheila up, which made her scream louder. Then she turned to Mom and said, 'Give me the child', and took Margaret, and then Margaret screamed too. At last it was all quiet except for Mom who sat on the sofa and laughed and laughed. We had a very big watermelon and everyone felt better. We had a lot of adventures with Mom's family in Cape Town.

### **1925 – Our first car and unexpected hazards**

I was eight years old when Pa bought Dr Hickley's 1923 Oldsmobile. It was a big open car with a very good engine. The front seat had been adapted for half of it to lie flat to make a bed, so it could be used as an ambulance. I knew Pa did not know how to drive a motor car. Also I was sure the car would explode with a loud bang. This meant that, if the family went out in it instead of the cart, I had to stay at home by myself. After a time when the car did not blow up I went in it, but then one day just as we got to the front gate there was a terrible bang. I leapt out and did not stop running until I was under the sofa cushions in the dining room. It was a 'blow out' of the back tyre, but I had to be persuaded to come out from under the cushions.

Now it only took an hour to get to Kokstad, provided it had not been raining much. If there was rain, we got stuck in all the streams, especially on the Kromdraai<sup>39</sup> road. We always took spades with us. But sometimes we were so stuck, we had to go to the nearest house and borrow a span of oxen to get us out.<sup>40</sup> Mostly, we managed by pushing and digging. There were special hills for getting stuck on the way home if it rained when we had gone to Kokstad. Then we had to struggle in the mud to put chains on the back wheels. Fawcett's Hill was the first sticking place, then Church Hill, and the last one was the steep hill about three quarters of a mile from home. Pa would rush fast at these steep long hills and as we were almost sticking, we all had to leap out – it was an open car – and push. This was not easy as our feet would slip. We used to get home very muddy. Mom did not push as it made her wheezy. Pa charged the road up the steep hill to where it was not red earth, but we still got stuck on the last steepest bit. Gradually more and more bits of the roads had gravel put on them. This was bad for the horses and oxen's feet, and we had to ride at the side of the road. Our horses were never shod because it was too far to town for the blacksmith, and shod horses slip on the rocks on the mountain. Their feet were very hard and never got sore because the earth roads did not wear them down. Where the road was stony, the horses always walked. There was one hill on Mr Rennie's farm, Mpatoane, where the antbears sometimes made actual holes in the road.

After we had a car, we travelled so fast, at 15 or 20 miles an hour, that journeys were not so interesting as we could no longer see things like frogs and birds' nests as we went by.

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<sup>38</sup> So this was 1921.

<sup>39</sup> South African names in both Afrikaans and the various indigenous languages are often so evocative. 'Kromdraai', or 'Crooked turn'. One can just imagine the sharp bends on what must have a pretty primitive road in those days!

<sup>40</sup> The 1920s in South Africa were clearly a moment, almost ironic, of transition from animal power to the age of mechanization.

## Learning from Lucy Stopela – more home schooling

Lucy Stopela was a very good storyteller. I loved to sit with her and have her tell me the old stories about the jackal and the other animals. She used also to tell me details about her life, from when she was a little girl in Matatiele district, until she was grown-up and had children of her own. She did not like to tell stories during the day, which is working time. She would say that if I listened to stories before sunset, I would grow horns. However, if I helped her shelling the peas or some other pleasant job that we could do sitting together, she would say it would be all right and I might not grow horns!

She taught us to make clay pots. The clay had to be very well squeezed and mixed with ground-up pieces of a broken pot. We made a base and then built up the sides with 'snakes' and smoothed them over. The pots had to dry in the old outside bathroom. When quite dry, they had to be polished to make them watertight. First, you rubbed them with a smooth stone from a stream, then finished them off with a calf's hoof, which gave a very smooth shiny finish. Only when this whole surface was polished in this way would she allow us to fire them. We had to collect *mhlongo* (cowpats) that were still slightly damp and dry grass. She made a bed of *mhlongo* on the dry grass and some twigs. The pots were stood on that, not touching, and covered with the *mhlongo* arranged to form a little kiln. She then lit the grass with coals from the fire in the stove and left it all day. The *mhlongo* made a flameless, hot fire. The pots had to sit in the 'kiln' until it was quite cool. I loved making the pots, but the polishing was a rather boring job.

Lucy also taught me to make cakes and biscuits. She always helped me to clean up the mess I made in the pantry. I was making biscuits in the pantry once when I got a great fright. We had just got a telephone, but I would not speak on it, and I heard it ring our ring – which was long short long. Then Sheila opened the dining room door. She was looking important and said, 'Do you know what has happened?' My mouth answered for me without my knowing it: 'Yes, Aunt Minnie is dead.'<sup>41</sup> She said I had been listening, and said I was lying, when I said I didn't know how I had known about Aunt Minnie. Lucy said it was all right and not to mind, but I was very angry to be called a liar when I had had a fright. Afterwards, when she was much older, Sheila found out that you can know things without telling.

Aunt Eily was not happy at Alwyns Poort. So in 1926 Uncle Arthur sold up all his farm animals and ploughs and went to farm at Bathurst. They left but Walter was at school, so he stayed with us for a time until Uncle Arthur came back to fetch him. It was lonely without our cousins.

Mum went on teaching us. One day the school inspector came to see if we were being educated. Luckily we could answer all his questions and we could read well. Only long division.... Mom said Pa must teach us that. The school inspector never came back.

When I was ten we went to Cape Town again by train, but not an express like the first time. Sheila and I liked travelling by train but it made Margaret sick all the way. This visit I got very friendly with Jocelyn.<sup>42</sup> It was a holiday mostly of lying on the beach, but one day Mom said we could go to the bioscope. I was very excited because, outside the Olympia, near the fishing harbour, were wonderful pictures of prehistoric animals. We had seen their skeletons in the museum in Maritzburg. We got tickets and sat in

<sup>41</sup> Lady Maria Sobella 'Minnie' Molteno died in 1926. Cynthia was 9 years old at the time.

<sup>42</sup> The two cousins were only a year apart, Jocelyn having been born in 1916 and Cynthia in 1917.

the dark on strange-smelling seats. There were many films that I did not understand, but at last it was *The Lost World* starting. There were people going through the forest and forest animals like monkeys, but no brontosaurus. Then the lights came on and we all went out. I was so disappointed I nearly cried. Jocelyn had seen a bioscope before and she said, 'let us have an Eskimo pie'. We ate this ice cream<sup>43</sup> and then all went back in again. I stopped wanting to cry and now we really did see this wonderful film. I left at the end in a dream. Afterwards we went to the Olympia quite often on Saturday afternoons, but never was anything so wonderful as *The Lost World*.

### **Our first governess**

Now I was ten years old and Sheila eleven. Mom said we would have a governess. Her name was Janet O'Mahoney. She had red hair and a violin that she played most beautifully. After a few days of teaching, she said now we would be in Standard Five. New books had to be ordered and came in the post. The most exciting one was the Latin book. Sheila was the eldest, so she had first look and at the back she found a vocabulary. The Algebra and Geometry were not quite as exciting, and the French went beyond *Le livre rouge* and *Le livre bleu* which Mom had taught us. This was an exciting year of learning new things. But Miss O'Mahoney liked Sheila much the best and said I might be cleverer but she worked harder. She took her to spend the holidays with her in Maritzburg and I was very jealous.

### **The post – not deliveries twice a day!**

Now we were old enough to take the postbag to Mr Dunnet's shop, which was the Post Office and Telephone Exchange. It was 5 miles there and we took the bag on Sundays and on Wednesdays, and fetched it back on Monday afternoons and Thursdays. It was heavy carrying the bag back with the strap round one's neck and over the right shoulder. Sometimes there were parcels to carry as well. It took us nearly an hour to get to the shop and we used to go and visit Mrs Dunnnett if the post got there late. The post came in a cart with one horse driven by Klaas who had to fetch it from Kokstad. Sometimes the train was late and he had to wait for the post to be sorted in Kokstad. If he was too late, we had to go home and come back next day. Mr Dunnet used to get worried if Klaas was late, and say we must go home. He was worried, too, if the river was full in case we could not get across,. And he would tell us to look at a spot on the opposite bank, and not at the water, in case we got dizzy and fell off.<sup>44</sup> He had come from London during the Boer War, and never really got used to [...?] and full rivers. He was a very kind man and sometimes gave us sweets from the shop.

It was sad when the year ended and Miss O'Mahoney left to go and teach at the Collegiate in Maritzburg. Mom had difficulty finding a new governess. Norah Barr came from Maritzburg. She was quite young and she tried hard to teach us, but she was not a qualified teacher and we did not get on so well.

In August 1929 John was born. And now at last there was a boy in the family. I wished very much that I had been a boy so that everyone would be glad to have me. It is a bad place in a family to be the second

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<sup>43</sup> Eskimo pies were a slab of vanilla ice-cream stuck on to a little wooden stick and coated in a thin layer of chocolate. They were still going when I was growing up as a boy 30 years later in the 1950s. And they figured in the popular song, 'Ag please, Daddy'. The notion of an interval was a foreign concept for Cynthia at this stage.

<sup>44</sup> It sounds as though Cynthia and Sheila rode to the Post Office rather than walked.



girl and have to do what the eldest says, and not be a baby that is loved. Also it is a great difficulty to have a sudden fierce temper.

At the end of the year, we went to Cape Town. This time we went by sea again. Although now the ship was bigger, I was nearly dead by the time we got to Cape Town as the only time I stopped being sick was when we went ashore in the launch and spent the day in Port Elizabeth. The launch was so bouncy coming back that the ship felt almost like land again. We did not stop to load at Mossel Bay. This was our last holiday at Kalk Bay as Grandpa died later that year.

Jocelyn [Molteno] had a governess called Violet Barbour. She was Irish but had an M.A. from Oxford. Mom arranged with her that she should come to us the following year when Jocelyn would have written her Junior Certificate. Sheila got very friendly with John Kilpin and they reckoned they were in love.<sup>45</sup> John had just written his matriculation. I did not really like that family; they made me feel more shy than ever.

Sheila and Elizabeth with Aunt Evie left before us as Sheila was to go to boarding school at St John's in Maritzburg. When we went home, Norah Barr came back to teach me and Margaret. She was incapable of teaching Standard VII, so I was kept back a year because it was thought wrong that I should be in the same standard as my elder sister. As a result, I spent a year of great scholastic frustration and my temper was very bad at that time. I often wanted to kill poor Norah for her stupidity. But I started training horses and this helped my frustrations. From then on, I trained all the young horses. We used to take part in all the gymkhanas and did very well as a rule.

Margaret and I became much closer at this time than we had been before.<sup>46</sup> We became very friendly with the Moxhams and quite often rode over to spend the weekend with them. Denzyl was an entertaining fellow who always had a try at everything, from wildly riding in gymkhanas, to getting nowhere in tennis tournaments, where he would set up a game of poker and win all the prizes, or take anything else we possessed off us. We climbed to the top of Mount Currie one day – the only time I did this. With these friends I lost my shyness, but still found other people difficult to deal with.

We did a lot of sailing on the river, first with a wooden canoe and then a boat which Pa made with our help.

### **Schooling Pa's polo ponies**

I spent a lot of time helping Pa school his polo ponies, but I was never any good at playing as my wrist was not strong enough. We used to go to town every Saturday morning now, not once a month as in the days of the horse and cart. We would have a picnic lunch, often at the golf club, and then go out to the polo ground on Alan Pringle's farm in the Druvig. Pa was a very keen and good player. I often rode home on one of the ponies. It was 14 miles by the short cut along the telegraph line, and we used to arrive home in the pitch dark. But the horses knew every step of the way and would walk along at a good speed. Our horses were always taught to travel at a fast walk or at a faster pace if they were able to. Not all horses go into this action automatically. But it is by far the most comfortable and fast way of covering

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<sup>45</sup> Sheila Stanford and John Kilpin married in 1937 and had three children. This is how the Kilpins became yet another part of the extended Molteno family.

<sup>46</sup> There was a three-year gap between Cynthia and her younger sister, Margaret.



long distances. I never knew any horse give trouble in the dark, even those most difficult to manage normally.

When Violet Barbour arrived to teach us, it was good to take an interest in school work again. The only trouble with her was that she did not like getting up in the mornings, especially in winter. As I insisted that afternoons were not the time for sitting inside and that lessons must therefore start at 7.15 a.m., it used to take me some time every morning, with cups of coffee, to get the teacher to school in time! However I managed to get her fairly well trained until we had a heavy snow storm and she took to her bed. We had a nice skiing and tobogganing holiday until the snow melted. My temper improved considerably as Miss Barbour did not frustrate me.

### **Finding rock paintings up the mountain**

At this time I took to riding by myself up the mountain. There was not a corner of the farm I did not explore. I was sure there must be Bushman paintings somewhere and one misty, drizzly day I discovered some lovely paintings on a rock face near the waterfall above our old swimming pool. There were not many of them and the place was exposed to the weather and to veld fires. And I have been told that they have faded badly in the last 50 years. My careful copies of them have unfortunately vanished. Despite endless searching, these paintings were the only ones I ever found on the farm.

### **Becoming a very good rider**

I had become a very good rider and could manage even our most unruly horses, and greatly enjoyed riding them. I would spend hours training the wild young horses. There was only one horse I never rode. Nor could anyone else, as he was utterly vicious. He was a thoroughbred Orient that Pa had bought from Alan Pringle – a magnificent chestnut. To begin with, he seemed easy to train, until the devil took over. He was turned out with the mares and ran wild for the rest of his life. Some of his progeny were on the difficult side, but luckily none were possessed of the devil.

Many hours were still spent painting, or now more often modelling. But there was of course no one to give me any sort of instruction in this. I always had difficulty with drawing, and it was only a few years ago when discussing my problem with a psychiatrist friend that I was told that my trouble was typical of a certain form of dyslexia.

### **Leaving home – boarding school at last**

Finally after passing Junior Certificate, I was sent to boarding school.<sup>47</sup> I was excited at the prospect of meeting other girls of my own age with whom to make friends,. But this never happened. My shyness made me awkward. I was desperately homesick and driven almost distracted by restrictions, and above all had no idea how to get on with other people. After two years of imprisonment, I passed Matriculation and returned home, not knowing what to do with my life and terrified at the thought of finding myself having to do something that would mean mixing with other people and facing rejection again. When a year later, Mom decided I must go to the art school in Durban, I was delighted but

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<sup>47</sup> This would be for the last two years of secondary school.

terrified into fits of migraine. But this was when my whole life changed and I discovered lifelong friendships, and above all, that I was not after all an ugly duckling, too thin, brown-eyed and curly haired!

### **Annex to this chapter: Stories from the Quarterdeck**

Grandpa lived at Quarterdeck with roundabout four acres of ground from where Boyes Drive now is down to the Main Road. Beaufort Cottage, still there but somewhat altered, was right at the bottom of his land. It was there that we stayed as small children. There was no room at Quarterdeck because Aunt Ellen and her personal maid occupied the two spare rooms. Minna used to cook for us and Emily was the housemaid. Minna was illiterate, so all her wonderful recipes were contained in her head. Her domain was down a rather steep staircase from the dining room. The kitchen was a rather dark place smelling of spices. Christmas always took a long time coming. But Minna faithfully searched the *Cape Times* every day until at last the first advertisement of Father Christmas appeared with his picture and we would rejoice together in the kitchen in great excitement knowing that the Great Day could not be far off. Now after all the excitement and looking forward, I have only vague memories of the party round the big mahogany table at Quarterdeck.

Christmas Eve I do recall at the age of four. Our parents had gone out and left us alone (the only time this ever happened in our lives). Sheila, Margaret and I were too excited to sleep. Suddenly there was a loud knocking on the front door. Sheila and I were far too frightened to get out of bed. But Margaret, aged two, was not old enough to feel our anxiety and we ordered her to let Father Christmas in. She struggled with the catch on the door, calling out 'I'm coming, Faver Christmas, I'm coming.' At last she got the door open and there on the *stoep* stood Uncle Clifford Molteno. Uncle Clifford was a delightful character but did not seem to understand who he was that night (Father Christmas). His niece, Carol, once introduced him: 'This is Uncle Clifford. He narrowly missed being a genius.' It was a great disappointment for us. And when our mother returned shortly afterwards and heard our tale, we could not comprehend her laughter.

### **Aunt Ellen and Canon Ogilvie – 'Gog' and 'Magog'**

Aunt Ellen (I think she was Grandpa's second eldest sister) was a famous needlewoman and used to sit on an upright chair at the far end of the long narrow sitting-room at Quarterdeck. The walls were lined with Grandpa's collection of paintings, which were his pride and joy. These I loved to look at, but the sight of Aunt Ellen, in black with stiff lace collar and lace, seated with her lace-making equipment on the high table before her, reduced me to a state of quaking terror. Every morning we were brought up from Beaufort Cottage to say good morning. Sheila would walk in without a tremor, and Margaret, with her plump little legs and bright smile, would enter with a gay 'Ullo Ellen'. But I stood shaking on the *stoep* outside, while my parents tried all kinds of persuasion to get me into the room – the back of the hairbrush being always the final painful persuader. This, as far as I remember, induced me to rush in and mutter, 'Good morning' and flee for my life. What Aunt Ellen thought of this morning performance, I have no idea. I never saw her smile. Perhaps her life had been somewhat blighted. Years and years before, she had become engaged to George Ogilvie, who was a schoolmaster. He declared however that he could not marry her until he had obtained a sufficiently good position to support her. She waited

patiently for twenty years, living on at Erinville,<sup>48</sup> until he was made headmaster of Bishops. They never had children and were known to the pupils as Gog and Magog.

There were many boyish tales about Canon Ogilvie. He was reputed to have come home one night, put his umbrella to bed (with Aunt Ellen?), and then stood himself in the corner. There is an avenue leading into Bishops and he was declared to have been seen coming home late one night, jumping over the shadows of the trees. My nephew still has the large silver tray that was presented to him on his retirement. At this time my Uncle Harold was head boy and had to make the presentation. When anxiously asked if he had prepared his speech, he replied, 'Of course'. When the great moment came, he stepped forward with the tray, handed it to Gog, and said 'To you from us', and stepped gracefully back.

### **'Get me to the train on time' – Uncle Harold Anderson cuts it fine**

My mother's family, like us, also used to spend the summers at Quarterdeck when she was a girl [back in the 1890s]. The two boys, Ernest and Harold, used to catch the morning train to Bishops. My mother had to catch it too, as did my grandfather, but in a first-class carriage, to get to his office in town. Dick Fernandez (my mother's age) had to stand on the *stoep* and report the progress of the train from Simonstown.<sup>49</sup> As it approached Fish Hoek, Grandpa departed for the station. Shortly thereafter, Mother started out. As it rounded the corner before the fishing harbour [Kalk Bay itself], the two boys would start to run. But there came the direful day when Harold delayed too long and the train set out again for St James without him. He had got as far as Dalebrook when it slowed down and proceeded hooting all the way at a slow pace to St James. As the train drew in, racing up onto the platform came Harold. But as he passed, the engine driver (Mr Wilson?) stuck his head out and said, 'You are a very naughty boy, Master Harold. I won't let you drive the engine again.' I'm not sure of this engine driver's name, but he met with a great tragedy. He lived at Simonstown and used to drive the afternoon train down and then return with it in the morning. On his arrival home one evening, his small child ran out onto the tracks to greet him and was run over and killed. He retired from his position and never drove the train again.

Our visits to Cape Town were great fun. We used to meet up with our cousins, Uncle Wallace Molteno's family from Nelspoort near Beaufort West. Jocelyn was not much older than me. We greatly enjoyed having other children to play with on the beach, where we spent all our days of those lovely summers. We were sometimes invited to children's parties by Mother's friends, the Beards and the Buchanans. These were great agony to me as I was desperately shy and did not know any of the other children. Added to this there was always jelly, which both Sheila and I found quite impossible to swallow and there was always some well-meaning terrible grown-up who would stand over me and say, 'Eat your lovely jelly, dear.'

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<sup>48</sup> Her father William Anderson's home in Rondebosch.

<sup>49</sup> From Kalk Bay you can see the suburban railway line for several miles as it snakes along False Bay where the mountain meets the sea. Hence the possibility for Effie's brothers, Harold and Ernest, to cut their arrival on the platform at Kalk Bay in the mornings so fine.

## 2. Life on the farm at Inungi

### How the farms came to be

In the 1880s when my grandfather was magistrate in Kokstad, there was ongoing trouble and cattle stealing between the Xasibes of Mount Ayliff district and the Bacas. It was decided to establish a line of farms along the border which were to be owned by white farmers who were expected to keep the peace between the tribes. This was...

[Editor's note: the text is interrupted here.]

### The rinderpest

My grandfather bought the farm, which consisted of three farms – Inungi, Alwyns Poort and Engelo – in about 1890. The boundary on the border side was a strong fence, District Fence Number Three. This was put up by the government in the early 1900s in an attempt to stop the movement of cattle in the rinderpest epidemic that was introduced from the north by trek spans and trading in cattle from areas where this disease was endemic. When the epidemic started, Mr Rennie was away overseas and had left his farm in the charge of a very fine lady who was governess to his son, Fergus. This redoubtable lady set guards to stop all movement of animals into Mpatoane, which was also a border farm. Mr Rennie, in gratitude for the saving of his herd of beautiful Herefords, built the church of St Andrews which we all attended.

### Where the farm was situated

The Ninge range runs northwards from the Ntsizwa. The Umzimvubu River flows along the east side of the range and then plunges through it before it reaches the Ntsizwa and flows on down towards Mount Frere on its way to Port St Johns. To the west of the Ninge range is the Mvenyani River which joins the Umzimvubu River just after it emerges from the gorge and forms the boundary of Mount Frere district and Bacaland. The farm stretched from beyond the Umzimvubu over the Ninge to the Mvenyani. It was an area of the most wonderful varied animal habitat. To the east of the river was a small pan where a great number of birds used to gather. I remember sitting above it and seeing the black river duck, *geelbek* duck, coot, white storks, grey herons, spur-wing geese and *galamule* ..., with the *vinks* busy in the reeds round the perimeter – all together in this small pan.

### The river

The river abounded with otters and there was a pair of ancient *likkewaans* who used to stroll along the bank. They were about six feet long and had no fear of humans or dogs. Water rats lived along the banks and puff adders could sometimes be seen taking a swim from the reedy banks. *Umvusis* (water mongoose) also lived near the river and were sometimes troublesome as they killed small lambs. In some of the backwaters there were colonies of water tortoises – beware, when fishing, the accidental hooking of one of these entailed a very smelly and difficult unhooking procedure! The otters, to judge by

their droppings, lived largely on crabs. These crabs also made fishing hazardous as they would take the baited hook and entangle it in the rocks at the bottom. The platanas were the most revolting to catch as they also had a horrible smell and were very difficult to ...[?] The otters had special haunts on the islands in the middle of the river where they would make themselves mudslides that would have been the envy of any child. The reeds were, of course, full of *vinks'* nests. I have often seen baby birds swimming below the nests and never found out if they drowned or were rescued.

The farmhouse lay to the west of the river and on the eastern slopes of the Ninge. This meant that the river had to be forded whenever we went to town or to visit any of our neighbours.

### The mountain and its wildlife

The mountain rose in ridges from the river and was climatically different on the east and west sides – the west side to a large extent comprising deep valleys with a southerly aspect and covered in forests. Down at the lower altitudes there was winter grazing [text unclear]. The forests had had very few trees felled apart from the top of the forest, which had been damaged by a tenant of my grandfather, who had felled and sold most of the big yellow-woods.<sup>50</sup> My father, when in need of planks, would send for the sawyers, who would fell and saw up a yellow-wood.

This forest was the most wonderful place in which to explore. The mountain pears grew to an enormous size and great beauty. The white stinkwoods and yellow-woods and red pears were especially beautiful trees. The ground was covered in wonderful scented salvia. The agapanthus grew in huge clumps on the mountain rocks. In late summer the blue streptocarpus covered the mossy rocks and rotting logs of fallen trees. And the delightful *moederkappie*<sup>51</sup> orchids grew in secret patches. Their little smiling faces with delicate pink cheeks are one of my loveliest memories.

In the bush was a family of *inkau* [vervet] monkeys. They must even then have been isolated from other families – I have been told that they have now died out. They always lived in the deepest part of the bush. But I spent many hours lying on the rocks overlooking a dense bit of bush listening to their conversation, which consisted mainly of loud clicks, and I imagine was a language closely resembling that of the Bushmen. The baboons also lived partly in the bush and partly on the open mountain slopes. They were totally wild and never came down to invade the mielie lands as they do now. The *rooi rhebok* were to me the loveliest of all the wild animals. They were always in danger of being poached by the neighbouring Bacas and certain of our other neighbours. These buck, however, managed to survive in fairly large numbers and were a delight to watch. I once climbed one of the steepest slopes of the mountain shortly after sunrise and came on a family of about eight buck standing or lying on a flattish patch of sweet grass and quite unaware of my presence. I crawled near them and watched them for some time without their becoming aware of me.

The jackals were the singers of the night and the sound carried like uncanny voices and gave rise to my sister's fear of flying skunks. She used to wake at night and shout at me from under the blankets to get up and shut the windows as they would fly in and bite us in the stomach. I used to rush across the room, hands before my face in order to ward them off, and shut the windows. It was a long time before my

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<sup>50</sup> Yellow-woods, one of the grandest and most valuable of the South African hardwoods.

<sup>51</sup> 'Mother's bonnet'.

parents realised what these flying skunks were that visited us nightly. The sheep had always to be corralled at night to keep them safe from the jackals.

This was the farm where I grew up. And my range of exploration increased as I grew older, starting from corners of the garden as a baby to covering every inch of mountain with its rocks and streams, valleys and ridges, flowers, trees and animals – nearly always with a horse and dog.

### **Why my father went farming**

For our parents those early days on the farm must have been very lonely. My father had given up his social and business associations when he decided to desert the law and start farming with his brother on their father's farms in East Griqualand. I think he had always hankered after the freedom and openness he had known in his youth when he had travelled about by wagon, cart or on horseback with his father, who was a magistrate at Ngcobo, Kokstad, and then Chief Magistrate of all the Transkeian Territories.

My father had obtained a B.A. in Science at the South African College (forerunner of the University of Cape Town), and from there won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford. He was called to the Bar in London and became a member of the Inner Temple. He then returned to Cape Town. He told us that there came a morning when he had donned his official garb and was tying his tie, when he thought he could not spend the rest of his life in what seemed like a trap. And that was the end of his life as a barrister.

His brother, Arthur Stanford, had studied Agriculture at Elsenberg, and the two of them started their life together at Inungi in 1911.<sup>52</sup> From very small beginnings, they built up their numbers of cattle and sheep. The old Griqua-built house, with its four small rooms, wide *stoep*, yellow-wood floors, and lean-to kitchen at the back, expanded over the years to accommodate a growing family. It was this house that was finally, and sadly for us all, burnt to the ground in a devastating veldt fire in 1977.

### **My mother, Effie**

My mother was a member of the huge Molteno Anderson clan. Most of her seventy-two first cousins lived at the Cape and life was lived in a crowd of contemporaries. She was sent to school at St Leonards in St Andrews, Scotland, but during her fourth year there she was summoned home, as her mother, Maria Molteno, was dying.<sup>53</sup> After her mother's death, she remained with her father as his companion and housekeeper. They travelled widely on the European continent and spent long periods in Italy. She also attended a finishing school in Dresden for a year, where she became fluent in German.

She and my father met when he was on a visit to Cape Town. They married in December 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I. When they arrived in Franklin (East Griqualand), after their honeymoon, they found that my father's brother had not come to meet them and they had to take the post cart to Kokstad. Arthur had in fact taken the horses and gone to enlist. As Inungi is a border farm, this meant that my father could not leave it for the duration of the War.

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<sup>52</sup> Cynthia's father was 27 years old when he decided to go farming.

<sup>53</sup> Maria Anderson (nee Molteno) died in 1903 at the relatively young age of forty-seven. Her only daughter, Effie, was seventeen at the time.

### Married life – settling in at Inungi

The house had been improved and a large living room added where the lean-to kitchen had originally been. My mother set to at once to make a garden, and to my grandfather's horror, cut down a number of trees that were obstructing the wonderful view from the house. But her efforts to settle into the house were defeated by the fact that it was a very wet summer that year, and all her new furniture and possessions, which had been sent up from Cape Town, stood on the wagon, covered by the wagon sail, on the far side of the flooded river. It was weeks before the water subsided sufficiently for the wagon to cross, and by that time considerable damage had been done to the furniture which had got wet and the wood swollen. Added to which, the rats had eaten the *riempies* of the stinkwood dining-room chairs!<sup>54</sup> Mother was not a person to sit down and bewail her misfortunes. The chair seats were repaired in the evenings and she soon had the house looking lovely.

### Rose Hermanus – 'the most important person in our early lives'

Rose was the most important person in our early lives. She was the daughter of a transport driver and his Coloured wife.<sup>55</sup> Her father was drowned in a sudden flood while crossing a river somewhere near Worcester. Rose was trained as a nurse by the Seventh-day Adventists. She had very strong feelings on religion and instilled in me an enduring knowledge of the omnipresent love of God. There was nothing that did not belong to His kingdom: the flowers, the trees and all living creatures belonged together and should be treated with equal kindness. Our daily walks were wonderful adventures. I recall sitting on the side of the red *donga* next to the road watching the *toktokkie* beetles making their dung balls which they rolled down the sandy sides of the *donga* to make them firm and round. I am sure no modern child gets the same thrill out of playing with an educational toy!

There was a rocky hill above the house. Some of the decaying ironstone formed flattish areas with rocks around them among which hard dry grey green ferns grew and where the *goggamannetjies* and lizards lived. If you lay still on the rocks, they would dart out after flies and other insects. The *goggamannetjies*, or *roqokiens* [?] as we later came to call them, had wonderful turquoise-coloured heads which would appear peeping over a rock.

Sometimes our walks were further afield and we rode in panniers fixed on either side of a pack saddle and mounted on Hofman, the donkey. Sheila and I each held a rein, which must have been very confusing to Hofman. Rose walked beside, or slightly behind, controlling the donkey with a long rope and a large stick. For distant picnics the panniers were carried by Monte, my father's big brown horse.

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<sup>54</sup> Chairs in South Africa often had wooden frames with a lattice of leather thongs for the seat and back.

<sup>55</sup> Before the age of the railway in South Africa – in fact, right up to the late 1890s – heavy goods could only be moved by ox-wagon. It was the transport riders who managed this system. It sounds from what Cynthia is saying that Rose Hermanus's father was White and that he had married a Coloured South African. This often happened in the Cape until white racial prejudice, segregation and legislative restrictions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century made relationships across the 'colour line' increasingly impossible.

When I was three years old, Rose decided to leave and complete her training as a maternity nurse. She worked for many years as a district nurse to the Coloured community in Pretoria, and in her later years as district nurse in Ladysmith, where I visited her on a couple of occasions. On her retirement, she moved to an old people's home in Athlone, where she was very near the Seventh-day Adventist Church and she again became very involved in church matters.

We need the Roses of this world to instil in children from the day they are born the holiness of God's earth.

### **Minna, Mother's 'wonderful cook', who accompanied her from Cape Town**

Minna, Mom's wonderful cook, had accompanied her from Cape Town and with the help of Lucy, who had cooked for our father, they soon had the pantry stocked with bottled fruit – peaches, pears, quinces and figs, ready for the winter. There was no really satisfactory way of preserving green vegetables, so, of course, one lived entirely on what was in season. In summer all vegetables grew well and the garden was soon bright with flowers. But oh, what a sad surprise for our mother when the first heavy frost occurred and all was blackened! No green left on the lawns, and the oaks and willows making beautiful patterns against a sky of the clearest blue. The veldt turned a mixture of gold and red from the frosted *rooigras*.

The pumpkins were brought in and placed in the big store room. As these were eaten, the pips were thrown up on to a lean-to roof to dry in the sun, ready for next years' planting. Later the mielies were reaped and brought to the house to form a great pile. There they awaited the threshing machine which travelled from farm to farm. It was an exciting procession, the machine itself with about eight oxen to pull it and other teams for the steam engine and boiler. This was the supply of food for the year. The mielies were stored in sacks and a fresh supply was ground every day in a hand-turned mill. The mielies were poured into the top of a box which narrowed down to a chute into the grinding machine, which was turned by cogs worked from a large iron wheel with a handle to turn it. This was quite heavy work and there were usually two girls taking it in turns to do it. The fresh yellow mielie meal came out at the side and was spilled into a sack.

### **Mielies – the all purpose staple**

There was always a large black pot of porridge on the kitchen stove and this was our staple diet. There cannot be many people now who know what mielie meal porridge really was. Made from freshly ground yellow mielies, thoroughly washed to get rid of all the husks, and boiled slowly for a long time in a pot without a lid. A lid was frowned upon – the porridge cooked more quickly if you had a lid, but the result was what was referred to as 'slimy'. In other words the grains should instead be soft but separate in texture. Porridge was eaten for breakfast with sugar and milk warm from the cow. It was also eaten at supper [?]. I wonder if this meal is to be found anywhere nowadays. Even in the Transkei, the mielie meal is bought nowadays ground and is white – which is preferred for its softness and ease of cooking where fuel is scarce. But white mielie meal has nothing like the flavour of the yellow. It was always reckoned also not to have the same nutritional value. Red kafir corn<sup>56</sup> was sometimes brought in small

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<sup>56</sup> This is sorghum which used to be quite widespread and was both a nutritious and delicious alternative, but with a lower yield per acre than maize.



baskets by the Baca women in exchange for red ochre. This, dealt with in the same way, was most delicious. The Maltabella sold in the shops sometimes has a faint flavour of what Kafir corn porridge should taste like.

Sometimes we had *putu* which was cooked very dry and had a flavour all its own and was usually eaten with *amasi*. The farm women used to make a porridge of a mixture of mielie meal and a certain wild spinach.

The nicest of all was the *umkupa*, which was a sort of bread made from fairly hard green mielies which had been ground by hand on a grindstone, using a small oval-shaped stone as the grinder. The grind stone was hollowed in the centre by having been chipped away by hand with a hard stone or stones. The grinding of these stamp mielies was a sound often heard outside the huts where a woman might be sitting beating rhythmically at her new grindstone. The green mielies were squashed, rather than ground, as they were juicy, but the outer husks were rolled off or pushed aside. The wettish meal was then made into a round loaf or wrapped in the green mielie sheath which was then steamed in a large pot. Just to remember this bread, with fresh butter spread on the slices, makes my mouth water.

Stamped mielies were often served as a vegetable for dinner. The stamping block was a hollowed out yellow-wood trunk, standing about three and a half feet high. The mielies were washed and poured in and kept damp by sprinkling them with water. The stamping was with a large wooden pestle. There were usually two girls stamping at the same time. They would raise their stampers rhythmically, bringing them down with a heavy thump. I never saw them get out of time and hit each other accidentally. In fact they often sang to keep up the rhythm. By this method the outer skin of the mielies was beaten off and the grain softened. This makes a much more tasty meal than the commercially sold stamp which has taken its place. Kafir corn was also stamped in the same way and took the place of rice, which was otherwise always served for dinner.

There were seasons for everything. In the spring, the wild asparagus grew among the rocks, being especially fine when there had been a veldt fire. This asparagus is green and thin. It is sweet and has a far better flavour than the domestic variety. The season for asparagus did not last long, but the green peas followed, with the globe artichokes, and then all the other summer vegetables – and were very welcome after the pumpkin and cabbage of the winter months. The best time of all was the season for green mielies and these we ate in huge quantities.

There was also the season for *qunubes* (wild raspberries), which we would pick from the brambles growing among the rocks on the mountain. The farm children used also to pick these berries and bring them to sell. They were rather 'pippy' and consequently were usually made into jelly.

Housekeeping meant thinking well ahead as a trip to town (Kokstad) only took place about once or twice a month. Sugar and meal were bought in 100 pound pockets and stored in a tin-lined bin in the pantry. A supply of dried hops was kept for making yeast for the bread. And there was a smaller bag of white flour for cakes. Home grown wheat was ground on the grind stone, as also was the day's supply of coffee beans.

## Meat

In summer meat was in short supply as it was not often that it could be bought from the butcher, and without refrigeration the meat from a large sheep would not keep very long. Meat was kept in a 'safe', a fine wire mesh box covered in sacks, which were kept wet. If this was placed in a draught, it kept pretty cool. In winter, of course, the meat lasted well.

The slaughter of a sheep meant a wonderful meal that evening. The liver and kidneys were cooked together, and we finished off a large dish of fresh liver served in a thick gravy. As a very small child, I was inclined to prefer my liver raw, and my eldest daughter inherited this predilection from me. The head and legs of the sheep had to be scalded and plucked, never skinned, and slowly boiled at the back of the stove until all the meat fell off. The skull and leg bones were removed and there was *kop 'n pootjies*, our next meal. The roasts and grilled chops had to be hung for a few days.

There were a good number of fowls which wandered freely and were fed in the evening on mielies, when they were shut in the fowl *hok*, where they perched on poles suspended from the roof on wires. As they were free to roam all day, we had to find the eggs by searching for the nest when the hen left it, cackling triumphantly at her achievement in laying an egg. Finding eggs in the nest was one of my greatest thrills when I was two years old. Their shape was so satisfying. But in the autumn, the hens used to moult and went off laying. There would follow a period of a couple of months without eggs. Lucy always said, 'They will start to lay when the mielies come in.' This was true.

The rock pigeons used to come to the salt trough put out for the cattle and sometimes supplied us with pigeon pie!

The pigs – we usually had two – were slaughtered during a very cold spell when there was a heavy frost. The pig was killed in the afternoon, scalded with boiling water, and all the bristles scraped off with hoof knives. It was then hung up to be frozen overnight, and early next morning cut up and the hams and bacon thoroughly rubbed with salt. Nobody enjoyed this very cold and sore-hand-making job. The next process was to boil the brine – a mixture of coarse salt, saltpetre and hops. The hams and bacon were placed in wooden tubs, filled with the brine, and weighted down with planks and heavy stones. After ten days they were taken out and turned over and then weighted down again. After three weeks they were hung up to dry, and then sewn into calico bags to keep insects off, and hung from the rafters of the pantry hut. The chine was sawn out when cutting up the pig, and this was cut into joints for roasting. The neck was also used for roasting. And all the odd bits and pieces were cut up and put through the sausage machine. The skins for the sausages were brought from the butcher and kept in salt water. Finally, the head and feet were made into brawns.

## Necessities

Candles had to be kept in large supply as one never knew when the river would flood and make communication with town impossible. This, of course, applied also to matches, salt, sugar and such like necessities. Paraffin came in boxes which held four 5-gallon tins. These good strong boxes were used for many purposes – such as bedside cupboards, with a shelf fitted in the middle. When stood on end, they were ideal for this. One usually hung a pretty curtain across the open side, which had been the top originally.

The wagon used to be sent to town occasionally to bring back supplies and take mielies etc. to be sold.

There was an oil lamp on a fine iron stand which was used in the dining room. It did not give a very bright light. And when the Tilley lamp was invented, we were very pleased. Each bedroom had a candle in a candlestick, with a box of matches. We, however, were never allowed a candle. Our mother, having put us to bed, took the candle away with her in case we caused a fire.

### Lucy Stopela – hearing stories, learning wisdom

Lucy was born in the Matatiele district of Basuto or Barolong parents. Her grandmother, a little woman, had come with Adam Kok from Griqualand West.<sup>57</sup> She had a great influence on Lucy. She taught her that work and good health were interdependent. Sometimes when I feel tired and down, I remember Lucy's response if I ever said I felt tired and not well: 'Take a hoe and go and dig in the vegetable garden, or if you're too ill, sit down and pull out some weeds and you will feel better.'

There was a shop in the area and Lucy and the other children were sent there by their parents to buy certain necessities. The shopkeeper, as the tradition was, gave each purchaser a small *basela*,<sup>58</sup> and in this case it was a little sugar. This they took home, where it was carefully emptied out and buried, as it was obviously some sort of poison or spell. However, there came a day when the children, with the usual curiosity of children, opened the *kardosi*<sup>59</sup> and tasted the sugar. After that no 'poison' was ever taken home by the children!

One of the last clans of Bushmen [the San] lived in the vicinity. But there came a time when they moved off 'to their own places', leaving behind a couple, Rooibaatjie and Qikiqi. They were taken into the protection of Lucy's family and from them she learned a certain amount of the Bushman language with which she used to make me laugh. I'm not sure whether she was merely imitating the sound of the language or actually speaking it. She said what always fascinated the children was to follow the Bushmen on their food collecting forays and watch them open up the anthrills which abound in that area, and collect the larva, regarded as a great delicacy. I think the couple had a baby and thereafter vanished, perhaps 'to go to their own places'. I believe this Bushmen clan was the last to survive in the Transkei.

One of Lucy's other tales was of the woman who came from afar and took up her abode nearby. She had in her possession a strange animal by which she set great store. It was called Kati. The children took it one day to play with in the *donga* nearby and there it was killed by the dogs. A great case was made of this and the matter finally settled by the headman, who decreed that the fathers of the children had to pay ten female goats to the owner of the cat.

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<sup>57</sup> This is another whole fascinating chapter of South African history which cannot be told here. The Griquas were a mixed Khoikhoi-European population. When their territory in the Northern Cape was appropriated, several thousand Griquas under the leadership of Adam Kok trekked hundreds of miles and settled in an area just east of the Transkei that came to be called East Griqualand. There is a little museum in Kokstad dedicated to the history of this community.

<sup>58</sup> A tiny gift, if I am not mistaken.

<sup>59</sup> A little twist of paper wrapping something up.

There were no horses among these people and oxen were used for all forms of transport. I do not know if they are still ridden in that area, but it was a common sight in my youth. Lucy said as a child she did not have a riding ox as she was too small and had to be content with the goat. Her father was killed in Hlope's war in 1880.

Lucy and some of the family moved to the Druvig area near Kokstad and worked for a family called Keel. It was there that she and the other women were working on the lands when a strange and terrifying monster, which made a great roaring sound, came racing along the road, throwing up a trail of dust. The women flung away their hoes and fled screaming to the house, to be calmed and comforted by Mr Keel, who had also never before seen a motor car.

Unfortunately for Lucy, but luckily for us, the milk on this farm went 'stringy'. This I think is caused by a virus. Of course it meant that a witch was to blame. Lucy, being a bit psychic, was singled out as the witch and fled for her life with her three children. She had a relative who was working for my father and Uncle Arthur at Inungi and she sought shelter there. She was given a hut above the rocky ridge at the back of the house and was employed by my father as cook. No great skill was demanded of her, as the diet consisted entirely of mielie meal cooked in different ways, with milk and *amasi*.

She used also to tell me of the day (about 1901) when a great icy gale blew up. She brought her two goats to the shelter of her hut and shut herself in with her three children, Nomciteka, Nani [illegible] and Joseph. She was not sure when morning had come as it was so dark and the door would not open. For three days they sat there unable to get out, and then they heard sounds of digging and some of the men released them. She came out and did not know the world. There were no huts or rocks or trees, just a vast whiteness. She said she was about to cry for her goats when she heard a bleating nearby and, after listening carefully, they dug and brought out both goats, alive but cold and hungry. This was always referred to by the older people of my family as the Great Blizzard in which hundreds of head of cattle were lost, as they were driven by the icy wind and landed up against fences and other obstacles and were frozen to death. I was told by Mr Rennie that the snow was six feet deep in the valley below his house. Mrs Rennie had not been long in South Africa and had brought her ice skates from London. She said she had wonderful skating for days on their dam which had frozen solid.

When my mother was married and came to live on the farm, she brought with her her Coloured cook, Minna. She and Lucy became friends and Minna taught her to cook other things than mielie meal. Minna returned to Cape Town after about eighteen months. She told my mother that she did not wish to die so far from home. But Lucy's story was that Stoni came in with a dead hen and reported it to my father, who said he did not know what it had died of and that it must be thrown away. Minna burst into tears and said she must go home. If she died, the master would say he did not know what she had died of, and would throw her away.

### **Setting off to Kokstad at cock crow**

A visit to Kokstad entailed an early departure. The horses were fed at second cock crow and given a drink. The wheelers became very knowledgeable about when to pull and when to hold back on a steep downhill slope. The leaders did not have this ability and were only expected to pull. The two drab ponies, who acted as leaders, sometimes had ideas of their own, especially Derek who was never cured of bucking and shying. He once got a fright when our Great Dane appeared suddenly out of the dark,

coming to welcome the family home. Derek shied so violently that he fell into the fence alongside the road, pulling Wasp with him. Fortunately, apart from a few scratches, no harm was done.

It took three-and-a-half to four hours to reach Kokstad, depending on the condition of the road. There were many places too steep for the horses to trot, up or down, which made the journey slower than if one was just riding on a horse. My father would never allow too heavy a load for the horses to pull. So from the age of seven, and when my sister Sheila was already eight, we did not go on the cart, but had to take turns to ride behind, or in front of, the cart as there were now four children in the family. We had a lazy pony called Budge and I was inclined to get left behind. On one occasion, I got chafed by the elastic in my bloomers, and my mother removed them and I rode bare-bottomed.

### **The Umzimvubu – ‘Home of the Hippopotamus’**

In the early days the Umzimvubu was a big and full-flowing river. Even in the terrible drought of 1932-33, it continued to flow steadily although we were able to explore parts of its rocky bottom that had never been revealed before. This, I am sad to say, is no longer the case as the river, with its tributaries in the Transkei, has been badly affected by the overgrazing of its upper reaches in the mountains and by the disappearance of the long grass on the Cedarville Flats, and by irrigation pumping. The Flats used to become a huge shallow lake in the summer with deeper pans in some places. In the wettest times this huge reservoir kept the water from creating flash floods and could keep the river ‘full’ for weeks or months on end. There were occasions when it overflowed its banks and flooded the adjoining lands, but this occurred only in the very wet summers. Now the river is a shadow of its former self and subject to dangerous flash floods.

### **River crossings – stories to remember**

The river had a great influence on our lives as we had to cross it to get anywhere from the farm. The road from Kokstad crossed at a wide drift and being a government road between Kokstad and Mt Frere district, it had a government ‘box’ to make it fordable at all times. The box was suspended from a cable stretched across from the higher banks, and running through the space in the iron hangers by which it was hung from the pullies on the cable was a strand of wire. One stood in the box and pulled oneself along by this wire. This was very hard work as the cable sagged in the middle, making the second half of the journey uphill. It took more than one strong man to pull a heavy load across. This box, which was about three miles from the house, was our only means of crossing the river in times of flood.

Our horses had become accustomed to the river. They used to be led some way along the bank above the drift and then led into the water. They would then swim across – helped by loud shouts and the cracking of the horse whip – and land at the drift where they could get out safely. The box then had to be removed from the pullies and the cart hung in its place. It was then pulled across by riems which had been strung across when the passengers were taken over. The pullies then had to be pulled back for reattachment to the box. This meant that we did not go visiting often when the river was in flood.

Trumps, the on-side wheeler, was a big very powerful Blauschimmel. He was also my mother's riding horse. And he was also incredible in the way he looked after his passenger if he felt him to be an insecure rider. I have known him pull the cart across when Domino, who was smaller, had been swept off his feet and was being washed against him as he swam – the water, of course, was flowing freely

through the cart. The wagon, however, could not cross until the water was low enough for the span of oxen to walk across safely.



### **An ox-wagon crossing a typical drift across a river in South Africa**

Our father, returning home from Kokstad one very dark and rainy night, arrived at the river and was unable to see how full it was. He tied most of his clothes to the saddle bow and took his little Arab pony, Derek, well up the bank, led him in, and set out after him. They were immediately swept away and he found himself in such darkness that he was not sure which way to swim. He finally found the bank and got ashore,. But of Derek there was no trace and Dad had no way of knowing whether he had found a safe landing or not. It was a long dark three mile tramp home. Next morning he went out at daybreak to look for Derek and found him standing outside the stable door waiting for his breakfast!

In December 1924 we went to church – the church was on the Rennies' farm – for the once a month service. Mr Veal, who was a lively preacher, to my horror announced that it would rain for forty days and forty nights and all the world would be flooded. After the service none of the adults seemed to be taking this warning seriously. We inspanned and proceeded, as usual, to have our Sunday dinner with Mr and Mrs Rennie at Mpotoane. However, when great black clouds began to build up, instead of staying to play tennis, we set out with all speed for home. As the storm approached, I became more and more terrified as we had not provided ourselves with an ark. My father had no patience with my fears of the storm and threatened that, if I did not stop crying, he would make me get down from the cart and run behind. For many years after this, I had great faith in Mr Veal's ability to forecast floods as that storm was the beginning of the worst floods that ever occurred, until the great flood of 1958.



It was as the river was almost back to normal in the late summer that two weary and sunburnt visitors arrived one evening, Mr Guthry, the magistrate from Matatiele, and his friend Mr Nathan. Mr Guthry had become obsessed with a plan to navigate the Umzimvubu from Cedarville Bridge to Port St Johns. He'd had a flat-bottomed boat built in Cedarville and had launched it early that morning. He and Mr Nathan had not known about the waterfall and rapids in Valschfontein,<sup>60</sup> but they somehow managed to get the boat down on the east side of the falls where there is a section of rapids. By nightfall they had got as far as our mielie lands and been brought to the house by the herd boys who were picking mielies for their supper. Mr Nathan, in shorts, was badly sunburnt and dispirited, Mr Guthry full of optimism. My father warned them of the hazards ahead when the river became a series of rapids as it plunged through the mountains. He offered to buy the boat if they should be wrecked within retrieving distance.

We helped them down the next small waterfall and waved them goodbye. Then we raced round on horseback – this is the first time I recall riding a horse at a fast canter on my own for a long distance. We watched them negotiate the next wild rapid successfully and then disappear down the long loop past the drift. It was late in the afternoon when a note arrived from my uncle's farm (about a mile from us) saying, 'The boat is yours'. They had capsized at a place known as Castle Rock where the river narrows past a huge black rock and they had got into a whirlpool. They lost all their supplies and only just saved the sealyham which was trapped under the boat. That boat changed our lives considerably. It was moored about a mile from the house and we were always able to cross the river from then on. When my father bought a car about eighteen months later, he built a garage on the far side of the river. By watching a certain rock which could be seen through field glasses from the *stoep*, we could tell if the river was rising too high for the car to cross and there was then time to take it across the drift and park it on the far side. This entailed making a new road to where the boat was, but that was quite easily done.

There was no right of way to where the boat was kept. But the black travellers between Kokstad and Bacaland ceased to use the box, of which they were afraid. There were always people waiting to be ferried across at the cost of sixpence each. We frequently found ourselves acting as ferrymen. Bulu and his sister, Jane, lived on the far side of the river and they both became excellent oarsmen.

There was, however, one snag with this happy arrangement. Saturday was the day for going to town, and in the evenings we often stayed on for the film in the town hall. Now, how this came about I never quite found out, but almost inevitably when we got back, someone would have taken the boat to the other side and for some reason (always plausible) it was always my turn to fetch it. My father in later years said he thought I enjoyed doing it! Here again it was not easy in the dark to judge the strength of the current. So I had to allow myself a long distance of down drift. The bank on the opposite side was a double bank – a low reedy bank with a high one above it. If the evening was light enough, I could float down alongside the reeds until I could see a pole on the upper bank against the skyline and knew I had reached the landing stage. But if it was dark and cloudy, I had to float close to the reeds and feel for the boat, directed by shouts from my father and the rest of the family. This would have all been great fun if I had not suffered from a not-dared-to-be-told fear that a water snake might wind itself around my neck! I'm glad to say none ever did – nor did I ever meet a dangerous water spirit, which my black friends assured me haunted the river.

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<sup>60</sup> Literally, 'False Fountain'.

### **Effie's asthma emergency – bringing the doctor across the river**

My mother suffered from asthma and this became very severe when I was about sixteen. We were always worried about her when the *msuku* grass was in flower. She had one very bad attack and did not respond to an injection of adrenaline. Our doctor had left Kokstad and moved to Maritzburg by this time, and had sold his practice to an Australian doctor, Sweetapple, who had in his youth had had polio and was lame in one leg. The river, of course, was in flood. That evening Mother became seriously ill and the doctor had to be asked to come. He, of course, could never have found his way to the boat in the dark on his own. So our friend Polo brought him on from his farm which was halfway to town. My father told me to get the horses to the boat quickly and meet the doctor. I got one of the herd boys to help me and we rode to the boat. This was at a time when we had had a serious loss among our horses, and the only two fully trained ones were the thoroughbreds, Huntsman and Black Star. The latter was of uncertain habits, but Huntsman was reliable as long as one did not pull on the saddle when mounting. I wonder now what that poor doctor must have thought of this expedition. Polo shone his headlights on to the boat for me to row across and get him up the steep bank. It was a pitch dark night. Once we were across, I put Huntsman up against a small bank, but being no horseman and lame, the doctor pulled on the saddle and the horse immediately reared. After a couple of attempts, I saw that it was impossible, so I calmly said that Black Star was much quieter. Fortunately, he stood still. I got the poor man on board, gave his bag to the youngster, and told him to run with it. I then set out holding my breath for home. But as usually happens with a horse in the dark, Black Star walked him like an angel. Fortunately horses see much better in the dark than we do, so we got to the house without a stumble. Needless to say, the doctor spent the night.

My brother, John Stanford, who was an engineer, built a bridge when he started running the farm which has successfully withstood the two worst floods that have ever occurred and were deemed to be a possibility once in 700 years.

We were not the only people with river crossings a part of their lives. There were farms on the Cedarville Flats with similar problems. The parson on his rounds of visits to his parishioners arrived one day at the Umzimvubu to find it in flood. He proceeded in the usual manner to undress and tie his clothes to the pommel of the saddle and lead his horse in. The horse, enlivened by a nice cool swim, strolled away before the parson had reached the bank. The grass had been burned in the spring – which always left very sharp ends to the burnt stubble. Only those with really tough feet could walk on it barefoot. The parson was used to shoes. Mr Todd, whose farm lay not far from the river, was roused by startled workers who rushed to the house to inform him that there was a mad white man down by the river. He was naked and throwing his hat on the ground and jumping on it, then carefully squashing the grass under the hat, standing on the spot, and then throwing his hat ahead again. His progress was slow and the horse moved on each time he approached!

### **Messing about with boats**

By the time I was eight years old, we were able to swim well enough to walk alone to the boat and to bathe and row about on the river. My father had a love of sailing and rigged up a mast and sail on the boat. He later built a much lighter and better boat for sailing, and we learned to manage it quite efficiently. We also at one stage made ourselves a tin canoe, but this was never very efficient under sail and had to have a long rope attached to a lump of cork fastened to it so that we could retrieve it when it sank – a fairly frequent occurrence.

## Fishing

My parents had stocked the river with trout and this gave them great pleasure when fishing in the rapids above the Deep Pool – we never found the bottom! Carp abounded at certain seasons, having apparently escaped from dams higher up. They occasionally shoaled and would be seen in hundreds swimming up the river. We would plunge in then with any sort of unlikely implement to catch them – never very successfully. My efforts with the pitchfork were declared too dangerous to other fishers. A golf club proved fairly successful but we never managed to catch one of the really big fish. The record carp caught higher up the river weighed 25lbs. Eels could be caught in certain places, but I hated catching them as they covered our hands in a sticky slime while we tried to get the hook out. Also they could not be killed by a hit on the head, but had to have their throats cut. I rather abandoned fishing and took up painting pictures of the river and its environs instead. I wonder what happened to all those funny paintings. The smell of tea in a thermos still reminds me of my fishing (or painting) expeditions to the river.

## A social life? Of course

The chief social entertainment was tennis parties. We all had our own courts, surfaced with fine gravel or crushed ant heap, according to which one had on one's farm. On Church Sunday, the first Sunday in the month, the tennis party would be held after dinner at Mr Rennie's farm, Mpatoane. This court, I think the oldest, had no wire around it as one stepped onto it directly from the *stoep*. The children were therefore kept busy fielding the balls. The party lasted all day and included a midday dinner.

On occasion, a bad storm might come up suddenly and necessitate a great arranging of sleeping accommodation, as the guests would be unable to go home. I remember one occasion when my mother chased my father out of bed at dawn to go and pick a sack of green mielies as she had nothing for breakfast for an extra eight people!

The standard of tennis was pretty high for those days. Children were taught to play from an early age. After a hard day's work, a couple of sets of tennis were used as a relaxation!

Another sport that became increasingly popular was polo. At that time the rule for polo ponies was that they should not exceed 14.2 hands. So the game was not as fast as it is today. But it meant that the working cattle ponies and Basuto pony-type horses were used. One of the earliest, perhaps the earliest, apart from the CMR, club was that formed by my father, Gordon Murray and Wilfred Southey at the Levels on the Cedarville Flats. This meant a long day for my father's ponies, the Arabs, Wasp and Derek, as it was about a twenty mile journey there. The team assumed the club name of the Magpies and their colours were black and white squares, arranged alternately. The Meads Club was formed shortly after, nearer to Matatiele, and became a much bigger club. The Levels was finally dissolved. But it was from these small beginnings that the East Griqualand polo tradition grew.

My father helped to form the Driving Club on the Pringles' farm, Fairfield..... **[Editor's note: the remainder of Cynthia's handwritten memoir here is missing.]**

There were occasional dances given at the Royal Hotel in Kokstad and these our parents used to attend, leaving us to spend the night with our cousins on the next farm. On one special occasion they left us with Mary and Lucy to look after us at home, as they were not spending the night in town. The sun rose shortly after they arrived home.

Members of the family used to come for visits, which was always very exciting and greatly enjoyed by my mother. They usually stayed for a month or so, and there would be much visiting backwards and forwards to the Murrys, my mother's cousins at Cedarville, and a 'sharing' of these so welcome visitors. Picnics to the bush, or the river, or the waterfall on Alwyns Poort, sometimes even to the waterfall on our neighbour, Fanie van Niekerk's, farm, Valschfontein. There was a huge and long-occupied *tegwan* (hammerkop's)<sup>61</sup> nest on top of a rock at the side of this waterfall. I think a *canti* lived in the whirlpools at the foot of the fall – which made it a dangerous place as it was a much feared water spirit. I might here let you know that one interferes with a *tegwan's* nest, or indeed with a *tegwan* himself, at great personal risk as he will send the lightning to strike you in retaliation!

After the introduction of motor cars in the mid-1920s, it became necessary to improve the roads. In time all the main roads were gravelled – which was hard on the hoofs of those spans of animals still used for horse- or ox-drawn transport. After the war [the Second World War, 1939-45], one ceased to see a wagon on the roads. And the beautiful Afrikaner spans of sixteen oxen are a thing of the past. The *mbexeshi*<sup>62</sup> with his long whip and his *mkhokhali* leading the oxen are only ghosts when shadows perhaps are to be seen at dusk coming home from a 40 mile trip from the railhead at Franklin.

Dances were held for special occasions on the farms. The guests' horses were all outspanned or off-saddled and put into a large kraal, or perhaps a small camp, to be caught and re-inspanned or saddled for the midnight journey home. At one such dance on the Cedarville Flats, a very English 'settler', not well acquainted with horses, opened the kraal gate to put his horse in, and allowed all the 'transport' to vanish into the dark, with the result that all the guests had to spend the night!

These social occasions were not very frequent and we mostly made our own entertainment. A large part of the day was spent riding about the farm, or swimming in the 'washing' stream, which flowed cool and clear from the mountain and formed quite large, deep pools – or swimming in the river itself. Both my parents read a great deal and books used to be passed back and forth with Mrs Rennie, who belonged to an English book club which sent out all the latest books. Our father spent most of his spare time reading the latest science books generally obtained in this way – the Everyman editions. With frequent letters from members of the family, we were always well-informed about outside happenings. The post came twice a week with the daily *Natal Mercury*. And then came the telephone and we were at once able to communicate with all our friends and messages no longer had to be passed on to our neighbours by notes delivered from one milk cart driver to another at the cheese factory!

### **Church – bees, music and Sunday dinners**

St Andrews, the church which Mr Rennie had built in thanksgiving for his Hereford herd having been spared from the rinderpest, is a rectangular building. It was entered up wooden steps with a small porch. Opposite the entrance door is a little vestry. The floor is of wood and there is a raised platform

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<sup>61</sup> A wader that constructs a huge nest.

<sup>62</sup> The driver of the span.

for the altar and the Bishop's chair, and a curtained-off area on the left for the harmonium, which was played by Mrs Rennie. The roof was thatch and the ceiling high. The loft was occupied by bees which on the whole recognised our right to attend the once-monthly service. This service is still attended by the descendants – and others – of the original congregation. The thatch had become too old and was leaking about three years ago and has been replaced by a new roof – a fortunate change as a veldt fire swept through the churchyard shortly afterwards and would certainly have burnt the church down if it had still had a thatch roof. The trees in the churchyard were burnt, but otherwise no damage was done.

Mr Rennie was a keen music lover and played the violin. In 1928, Janet O'Mahony came to us as governess. She too was a violinist. Mr Rennie formed a little group who played in the church. The service was opened by the three violins, a cello and the harmonium. The three violins were Janet O'Mahony, Mrs Charlie Hogg and Mr Mancini, the music master from the convent in Kokstad. And the cello was played by Mr Rennie. The hymns were also accompanied by this group. At the end of the service, a short classical work was performed. This was the only live music I ever heard and it inspired me with a great desire to play the violin. Mr Rennie gave me a violin to my great joy, but I made slow progress and Janet O'Mahony left us at the end of the year. Then after my father said he could not put up with the awful noises I made we returned the violin to Mr Rennie. Mr Mancini was a sincere Catholic and, although he had obtained special permission from the Bishop to play in a Church of England church, he always felt a bit guilty. And when one of the bees behaved in an unChristian way and stung him on the nose, he took this as a sign of God's disapproval and never returned.

I once fled up the aisle, accompanied by Margaret, as a bee had crawled up while I was kneeling and got into my bloomers and was starting on a journey round my tummy. By carefully derobing in the porch and a quick flick from Margaret, I was saved. However, Mrs Miller, a lady of strict principles, was not approving of our sudden flight and asked if I had felt ill. When I replied that I had had a bee in my pants, she was not amused.

Mr Veal was succeeded as parson in Kokstad by Archdeacon (later Canon) Pringle. He was a Transkeian by birth and by no means a fiery preacher like his predecessor. There came a day when the congregation watched, fascinated, as a bee set out during his sermon and progressed steadily up his surplice until it reached his collar. Here it ran into difficulties and we all watched eagerly each time it nearly reached the top. At last it achieved its unholy objective and crawled onto the Archdeacon's neck where he automatically hit at it and it stung him. He stepped to the edge of the platform and Polo Philips, as church warden, removed the sting. The sermon was hastily ended. When we all gathered in the churchyard after the service, the Archdeacon joined us and said sadly that, for the first time in his life, he had thought he was preaching an inspired sermon, only to discover that our intense concentration was focused on a bee.

The congregation came from the neighbouring farms and did not all belong to the C of E. So only a few of us remained on for the communion service. The rest met in the churchyard to discuss the month's news. Mr McKay was a Methodist and his wife Roman Catholic, Mr Rennie Presbyterian. I remember Mrs Rennie announcing that she was probably a Bush Baptist – which I thought sounded a lovely religion. After the service we proceeded to Mpatoane where Mrs Rennie's Basuto cook, Liza, would have prepared a Sunday dinner – the meat being a huge sirloin supplied by Mr Lahee the butcher from one of Mr Rennie's prime oxen. After a period of recovery, the afternoon was devoted to tennis. The children picnicked and played in the wattle plantation near the house. Our parents are both buried in the churchyard at Mpatoane. In later years we dined and played tennis at Gwen (nee Rennie) and Polo Philips' house at Palmiet which was the half of the farm that Fergus Rennie inherited.

If my mother was not well, mainly due to asthma, we children used to ride to church. We usually rode home in the dark, which I always enjoyed. One could not canter much in the dark, but even the most fractious horse would stride out at a fast walk. We were forbidden to take the horses out of a walk after crossing the river where they always had a long drink. Thus they would arrive home cool enough for a quick rub down before being put in the stable.

### How the post worked

It was one of our jobs to take the postbag to Mr Dunnet's store, which was also the postal agency, on Sundays and Wednesdays, and to fetch the post back the next afternoon. This postal service was provided by Mr Rennie. Klaas, a Griqua, was the postman and had a small cart with one pony. From Mr Dunnet's shop, he took the post back and forth to Kokstad, a distance of about seventeen miles each way. Sometimes the train was very late arriving in Kokstad. Klaas might not arrive back until sunset. If he had not arrived by then, we went home and tried again next day.

Mr Dunnet had come out from England in the London Regiment during the Boer War and had stayed on after the war when he joined the Cape Mounted Rifles and served under my grandfather for a time. He said the Colonel was a man who expected complete and unquestioning obedience. I think Robert Dunnett never became a great horseman. In fact I never saw him on a horse. There were often troubles and inter-tribal quarrels in the Transkei. The magistrate of the area had to take all responsibility for dealing with these matters. Mr Dunnett was on one occasion told to take a message from Elliott to Cala one late afternoon. It was raining and he ran into thick fog by the time he reached Cala Cutting, which in those days of practically unmade roads was a hazardous place. He said he was very frightened of continuing on his way, but much too frightened of my grandfather to sit down and wait for morning. He led his horse down the pass and arrived safely. Knowing horses and their senses in the dark, I am sure he would have been far safer on the horse.

He was always anxious about our crossing the river and would ask how deep the water was. If it was above the saddle flaps, he would instruct us not to raise our feet, but let our legs get wet and on no account to look down at the fast flowing water, but to keep our eyes fixed on an object on the further bank in case we got dizzy and fell off. We never did fall off, but the rushing water of the drift could certainly make one feel dizzy if one watched it. If the river was low, we always stopped at the drift for a drink at the soda-water spring, which bubbled up in a rock that the spring had formed, presumably below the level of the water, or probably in the bank, over the centuries. My grandfather had built up a stone and cement wall round and attached to this rock to prevent it being worn away by the water. The cattle would always drink at the spring in preference to the river water, but the horses did not like it. We used to fill a large stone *vatjie*<sup>63</sup> at the spring to take the water home for drinking. It went flat when taken from the spring, but made a delicious fizzy drink when lemon was added to it. It was a looked-forward-to drink by visitors who came to tennis parties. I remember my mother sending me off one morning on a big blauschimmel *boereperd*, Trumps, to fetch water for the tennis party. The *vatjie* held 2 ½ gallons and was made of heavy earthenware (like the old-fashioned ginger beer bottles). She handed the *vatjie* up to me to balance on the front of the saddle and then said she thought she had better tie it round my neck in case I dropped it! An idea of which I did not approve.

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<sup>63</sup> A small cask.



The postbag was a leather bag with a lock and a strap which one wore round one's neck and over the right shoulder so that one could grip it with the right arm when trotting or cantering. It was usually tightly packed as the two or three *Natal Mercuries* took a great deal of space. Around Christmas time our hands were also filled with parcels. Cantering homewards up the long slope from the river, my horse once fell a over large stone which the long grass hanging over the path had concealed. I turned a neat somersault, with my head on his neck, and landed sitting in front of him surrounded by parcels of all descriptions. Margaret nearly fell off herself she laughed so much, but to this day my coccyx has objected when I sit too long in one position. I found the hard school desks a great trial at boarding school.

There were occasions when it rained and the road was very slippery and made riding hazardous. When that happened, we walked, or ran, to the shop, taking a shortcut along an old track that crossed the river at Alwyns Poort by the Pulandoda drift [...?] This cut about a mile off the trip. The track was not a right of way, so we never rode along it. Near this drift there was another large soda-water spring in a pool in the bank, and other small [... ?] springs right down as far as Castle Rock, which had created quite a lot of limestone formations. I do not know if these springs are still in existence after the two big floods that have occurred since then.

### **Making our own soap**

In the summer, when the river often made it impossible to take butter – and butter there was in plenty at this time of year – to the Saturday market, it would accumulate. And when there was a sufficient number of pounds in the dairy, going rancid, this butter would be used for making soap. It was boiled up with caustic soda and then poured into cut open paraffin tins. After drying, it was cut into bars. This soap was very good, but it had a rather horrid smell and was used only for laundry purposes. *The Homestead*, the women's magazine which came with the *Farmers Weekly*, once recommended minced prickly pear as the base for soap. But it was a total failure.

### **The new orchard**

In 1919 my father decided to make a new orchard between the bottom of the garden and the kraal. The ground just there had a strata of shale running through it and this can be good for fruit trees. But it was too hard to dig. So he made small holes and pushed down a dynamite charge with a fuse which he lit and then ran for cover. Mother, Sheila and I lay flat some distance off and there was a great and terrifying bang. This shattered the shale and it was possible to plant the trees. These did very well until fruit fly was somehow introduced into the country, and after that only the early peaches were sound. They were at that time no sprays for fruit fly, and trapping was not efficient. At about the same time, codling moth was also imported, and this affected the apples and walnuts badly. Again, trapping was not effective.

The west side of the garden was protected by a hedge of figs. These trees produced a heavy crop of small black figs. The only drawback was that, when one sat up in the trees having a feast, the heavy leaves made one itch, as did the white sap if one should break a leaf off or pick a green fig. These figs were used for jam, which was very popular. There were also trees with large white fruit. We vied with

the *spreus*<sup>64</sup> for the biggest and ripest of these. Green fig *konfyt* and green apricot *konfyt* were a great treat.<sup>65</sup> Watermelons do not do well in the summer rainfall areas. So we did not often have watermelon *konfyt*.

### Why plant wattle?

Apart from the forests on the southern slopes of the mountains, there were very few trees in East Griqualand. This meant a dearth of winter fuel and fuel for cooking, and resulted in the deliberate planting of silver wattle, which in the early days was often frosted but became acclimatised and has now become a pest on a lot of farms. There were two very big silver wattles at the back of our house. The branches of these used to creak loudly in a gale and many a night I fled from my bed to take shelter in the dining room, as I was afraid the tree would fall and squash the nursery hut. This fear stemmed from a mighty gale preceding a hailstorm which had once blown over a large willow and flattened the pantry hut. This hut was a creepy place under the trees, with holes round the mossy foundations which were homes for frogs and once or twice a *ringhals* cobra.

### Growing oranges for sale

My father planted two orange groves on the Yenzela, one at what had been a police post in the early days and was now inhabited by Mqizi and his family – all dark-skinned and very tall. We always wondered if they were of Maasai descent. The other, slightly newer trees, were at Stoni's huts and even better than the first trees. These two orchards produced a wonderful crop of the best oranges I have ever tasted. It was our job to ride over the mountain every Friday, carrying a number of empty sugar pockets.<sup>66</sup> Some of the girls from our side took the path right over the Inungi Nek. This was shorter than our route but very rough for the horses. And some of the girls from the Yenzela side would meet us at Umzizi's. We selected and picked the sweetest oranges – the trees do not all ripen simultaneously – and put them in the pockets, about eighty to a load. The girls then set out with them on their heads, often racing each other, over the mountain. I cannot remember what they were paid. At the house the oranges were then sorted out according to orders from the previous week and taken in pockets to Kokstad on Saturday morning, where they were delivered to various people. The remaining few hundred were bought by Mr A H Williams and put in a large wooden box near the front of his shop. These oranges were very popular and we did very well out of them until the Citrus Board took over, after which we were forbidden to sell them direct to the shop and it was decreed that they must be sent by train to Pietermaritzburg market where they could then be auctioned (after being passed by the Board) and returned by train to Kokstad! Consequently these lovely orchards are no longer in existence.

### Mielies for the market

The main annual crop was, of course, the mielies. They were reaped in the early winter when they had dried completely. We did not have a large enough staff for this job which is quite hard on the hands. The mielies had to be pulled off the dry stalks, the dry sheaths removed, and the mielies thrown into heaps

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<sup>64</sup> Starlings.

<sup>65</sup> *Konfyt* is home-made South African jam.

<sup>66</sup> These jute bags were often designed for 28 lb loads of potatoes, onions, oranges or whatever.

alongside each reaper's row. These small heaps were then gathered up into sacks, and pay calculated by the number picked by each individual. To stray into your neighbour's row and heaps was a serious crime. As extra labour was needed, men and women used to come over from Bacaland and work as reapers. There was a lot of singing in the evening after work. Among the reapers who used to come was a pair of dwarfs – or perhaps midgets. This was 1929 or 1930. They were a strong couple and very good reapers. They had a small baby which the woman carried on her back. I have sometimes wondered if they were of Bushman descent. One cold frosty morning I was carrying John, wrapped in a blanket, along the road when they came by on their way to the lands. We stopped to pass the time of day and they asked why I had wrapped the baby up (he was about nine months old). I replied I did not want him to get cold, whereupon they laughed heartily and said no small child felt the cold as they had the warmth of birth still in them. Their children certainly seem to bear this theory out.

### **Herd boys**

The herd boys came from the neighbouring locations – the Tshiweni, Nomkhoto, Sigingoni and Mkhomaswi<sup>67</sup> – over the mountain. My father was highly thought of by a lot of the leading men, and the custom was to bring a youngster of about twelve years of age to be placed in my father's care. He was expected to learn to look after the sheep and cattle. His father would come at the end of each month or two and collect his son's four shillings pay, which was saved for future *lobola* purposes.<sup>68</sup> The older boys also learned to work with the trek oxen and had to walk at the head of the span with the lead *riems* that were fastened round the horns. This could be a bit dangerous as the Afrikanders had very big horns. I once had to treat a rather small *mkhokheli* who had been badly poked in the armpit. As far as I recall, I treated him with permanganate of potash, oranges, and a blanket under the oak trees where he could lie and keep cool. It was some days before he was well enough to be sent home.

### **Making our own *riems***

Any driver of a wagon caught on the roads without a leader was liable to have the *riems* removed from some of the oxen and confiscated so that he had to explain to his employer why he had returned short of precious *riems*. These *riems* were made in the following manner. A good skin was submerged in a boggy place – I forget for how long. It was then removed, fairly soft and manageable and cut into long strips. These strips were fixed to a good strong branch of a tree and a large oblong-shaped rock with a bowed branch wired to it. The *riems* were threaded through the bow over the branch. [Some of this is illegible.] A pole was then put through the arch between the branch and the rock, and then twisted round and round until the *riems* were shortened into a compact bunch. The pole was then pulled out and the stone spun very fast til brought up with a jerk. This process was repeated again and again until the *riems* were beautifully pliable.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> It has been difficult to decipher Cynthia's handwriting of these proper names correctly.

<sup>68</sup> Payment of brideprice, usually in head of cattle at this time.

<sup>69</sup> *Riems* were the home-made equivalent of very strong and long lasting ropes.

## Ox ploughing

The inspanning in the morning was a scene that might have appeared to be chaotic. All the oxen were brought to the area where they were to be inspanned. The trek chains were laid out on the ground with the yokes attached to them with *riems*. The oxen were then lined up facing the chain, *riems* tied to their heads round the horns and tied at the other end to the trek chain alongside the yoke. The yoke was stood up on end and the right-hand ox in response to a shout of '*jokw'e* would step forward. The yoke was placed on his neck and the strop slipped into the slots in the *jukskei* under his neck. The left-hand ox then moved up and the other end of the yoke was put on his neck and fastened. The first ox then stepped over the chain.

The wheelers were the first to be inspanned, followed by the leaders, and these were the kingpins of the whole span which was yoked in the same way. Young oxen still being trained were put into the centre of the span, with old oxen before and behind them, and in this way were forced to move, more or less, correctly. Sometimes they objected to the idea and would lie down or attempt to break away – they often succeeded and were pursued and dragged back by the trainers. On one occasion young oxen were being trained in the lands across the river and one young fellow bolted. Bulu had got him by the tail and was running, half flying half running, until they came to the riverbank where the ox did a right-about turn and Bulu swung out in a perfect arc above the fast-flowing water. He landed back on his feet and on they went. He was loudly cheered amidst much mirth.

The span worked until midday, when they were outspanned and they had a couple of hours to drink and graze. The 'boys' had their lunch, *putu* (dry mielie meal porridge) brought to them by the cook, Julia, who cooked it in a big three-legged pot and then carried it to the lands. Work stopped shortly before sundown. The big Afrikanders could not be worked with any other oxen as they moved too fast. The drivers, the *mbexeshi*, were all skilled and could keep a fourteen-ox span in a straight line by the use of the wagon whip, which had a very long lash to reach the whole length of the span, and tipped with a soft buck leather *voorslag*. If any ox was marked by the driver, he was in serious trouble.

## Sheep shearing

In the late spring the shearers arrived. They moved in the same order from farm to farm. The leader of the team was old Asvogel, who held the record for the number of sheep sheared in one day. There was a large yellow-wood platform on the covered side of the kraal on which the sheep were sheared. Next to this was a small enclosed stall where the sheep were penned, so as to be easily caught. Each shearer, as he finished with a sheep, let it go in such a way as not to disturb the fleece, which he gathered up in a carefully arranged whole and carried to the sorting table where it was placed, again carefully. He was then handed a disc called a *lootjie*, which he put in his pouch. He then caught his next sheep, carried it to his place, and started to shear again.



**Women preparing wool on Gordon and Evie Murray's farm, Greenfields, East Griqualand, early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The sorting table was slatted so that any loose pieces and impurities fell through. A worker now picked up the fleece and threw it onto the table where it landed in the shape of a slightly spread out skin. The sorter then removed the short belly wool, the short legs and sometimes part of the back if it was not up to standard, and also the neck. The fleece was then graded by the length of wool, and the quality of the wool in fineness, strength and colour. The fleeces were then placed in bales which were hung in large wooden presses, numbered for grade, and tramped down. This tramping was often our job as children and it left our feet and legs covered in grease or lanolin. When the bales were tightly packed, they were closed by a flap at the top and firmly stitched and marked from A fleeces to [...?] (the soiled wool). Shearing time was the time for many tales, some quite scandalous, others of historical interest.

Mr Leary, a magistrate who at times lived with us, had grown up on a trading store in Pondomisi land and was well acquainted with a great many headmen and chiefs. He once asked Asvogel what the descent was of a certain chief. Asvogel said he would have to work it out and would reply next day. He duly proceeded to give the names of the chief's forebears, going back for a good many generations until he came to Noah! Mr Leary said, 'Go on', and he continued, 'Noah, who was the son of Adam'.

On the last day of the shearing an old ewe would be selected and presented to Asvogel. It was duly slaughtered and eaten that night.

### **Transporting wool bales by wagon – watch out!**

Next day the wagon was brought into the kraal and the great job of lifting the very heavy bales (weighing 400lbs each) onto it started. The loading of the wagon had to be done so that the bales would not overbalance on the twenty-mile trip to Kokstad. Before the railway reached there in 1924, the wagon had to travel a whole forty miles to the railhead at Franklin. Fortunately, the roads were still dry at this time of year, as the heavily loaded wagon was always in danger of bogging down on Fawcetts Flats where the road was liable to become waterlogged. Bulu on one occasion had a wheel come loose and the wagon was about to capsize. He seized the side of the wagon and held it up while the leader rushed to his assistance and forced the wheel back on. How he achieved this feat of strength he could never afterwards say, but claimed to be a superman for it.

My mother always made a *vatjie* of ginger beer for the shearing, and shearing time is associated in my mind with ginger beer, the smell of wool, the hessian of the bales, and flies – which were greatly attracted by the ginger beer.

### **Silage making**

Silage making was a late summer or autumn job. The silage mielies were planted later than the main mielie crop. They were cut while still green by reapers with sickles, which required a strong wrist. The reapers proceeded cutting two rows each so that they sliced right and then left and as low down as possible so as not to waste any of the stalk. Nobelingu, Lucy's younger daughter, once got a sickle right through the calf of her leg, which was removed with great difficulty. The stalks were loaded onto the wagon and taken to the silage pit – this was cut into the side of a fairly steep slope so that it was an oblong pit open at the lower end. The mielie stalks were laid in this lengthwise and firmly packed down. When full, the silage was well above the edges of the pit. It was then covered with a thick mat of grass – closed at the end with a thatching of grass. A layer of stones was laid on top to compress it. The green stalks were full of sugar (we used to peel and chew them) and soon began to ferment. The smell of this silage was a sour-sweet smell, and very pleasant. The smell of silage in an enclosed round silo, in contrast, where the juices could not escape was pretty horrible. To feed the silage during the winter, it was sliced off with a sharp adze-headed pick and loaded onto the wagon and thrown off with pitchforks in a large circle. The cattle used to crowd behind the wagon with much noise.

### **Farm workers I remember**

Stoni, Riempie and Solomashi were the first 'boys' that I remember. I was about three years old when Dolfus joined the staff. His brother James worked for my Uncle Arthur at Alwyns Poort. After Uncle Arthur left the farm in 1926, James and his wife Ellen went to live with Big One's family down the river valley below Alwyns Poort. Ellen for many years worked for us as a seamstress and washerwoman. She was also much in demand as a dressmaker and made the bridal clothes for all the weddings on the farm. I think back to the brides' dresses as being very beautiful, with very tight waists and trains. From the age of about ten, I was expected to make the wedding cakes. They were always three-tiered, the top tier being baked in a cocoa tin. I always struggled to get enough icing sugar and, looking back, I think my efforts would not meet with much praise in these more sophisticated days. I remember vaguely that I



overdid the cochineal on one occasion and the cake was a rich purple colour with white 'roses' round it. I think it was considered one of my best!

## Weddings

Weddings were a great event.<sup>70</sup> The first part of the proceedings took place at the bride's home, where the feast was held and certain rites performed, and the church service held if they were Christians. The following day the bride was brought by her family and friends to the groom's home. Here further rites were performed. The girls and young men from the 'opposing' families performed separately in two groups who sang in turn. The guests would listen to each song – the singing continued most of the day – and any guest who admired the performance of one of the girls would step forward and stick something, usually a bit of straw or a grass stem, into her hair. The one who achieved greatest honour at the end of the day was the one with the most straws in her hair and the 'side' with the most straws was judged to have won. The groom was expected to slaughter the correct number of sheep agreed to beforehand. I think this was the same number as supplied by the father of the bride. Weddings were great events in our lives and Lucy's daughters' weddings I remember as being the best. Thinking back, the church service must have taken place at the bride's home. This certainly applied to Lucy's daughters.

## Courtesy and connections

My father used to relate how he had been taken by his father on one of his trips round the magisterial district to visit chiefs and headmen.<sup>71</sup> This enabled him to know what was happening in his large area. One day they had had a particularly long hot ride and at last came to a kraal where they stopped to visit. They were very thirsty and Gankoo (my grandfather) asked if they had any drinking water. They did not have any, but quickly brought out the calabash of *amasi* which was handed first to the small boy. My father took one mouthful and spat it out as it was 'over ripe'. His father removed the calabash from him furiously, drank deeply, and praised the hosts for their good *amasi*.

Ellen spoke with a particular 'dainty' pronunciation of certain words. When I enquired from Lucy why this was, she replied that it was because Ellen belonged to a grand family. It was years later that Ellen told me how her family had been honoured. It was a hot day and faraway the herd boys were shouting a message from hilltop to hilltop, 'He is coming and his son is with him.' They prepared themselves and swept the front yard, and the great *Ndabeni*<sup>72</sup> and his son rode up. He asked for their hospitality and stayed to converse with us and so gave great honour to the family. My father had never known that Ellen was a small child at that kraal. She looked upon herself as a member of our family and made no bones about helping herself to pounds of butter and mielies!

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<sup>70</sup> The weddings Cynthia is describing are the farm workers'.

<sup>71</sup> This would have been in the late 1890s.

<sup>72</sup> *Ndabeni* is a Xhosa word meaning a place where conversation or debate takes place and news exchanged. It was the title people in the Transkei gave to Cynthia's grandfather, Sir Walter Stanford. When at the turn of the century the number of Africans working in Cape Town became significant and a new 'location' had to be organized where they could live, the residents asked the authorities to call it *Ndabeni* after Sir Walter.

## The farm shop

Ellen's husband, James, was an important man as well. My uncle, Arthur Stanford, had a 'kafir' shop on his half of the farm, Alwyns Poort, and James was the shopkeeper. When one was sent to the shop to buy something, such as candles or sugar, at the conclusion of the transaction one was always given a small gift – a sweet. James used to let us choose which sweet we would have. They came in heart shapes, lozenge shapes, rounds and squares, and had something written them. I only remember that the heart-shaped ones were pink and had *ndiyaka tanda* – 'I love you' – as their message. There were also little sugary sweets about the size of a little-finger nail. I liked these best as one could chew them up, not being nearly as hard as the bigger ones. The finest of all were the 'apricots', the shape and colour of the fruit. I never liked their taste, but they were of course popular because of their size.

Now my sister Sheila and cousin Walter were sixteen and fourteen months respectively older than me, and I was bound to obey them or suffer the consequences. This law was even enforced by my parents. James used to lock the door of the shop at lunchtime and go home for his midday meal. The window of the shop was barred but one of the panes had been broken. I was small and very skinny and Sheila and Walter decided to use me as a cat burglar. They used to push me up onto the narrow sill. I then had to struggle my way in round the bar which was slightly away from the missing pane. The sack of mealie meal stood against the wall under the window. I landed more or less headfirst on this. The great danger was that the sack might not be full enough for me to reach the window to escape again. I knew where the sweets were kept and I had to steal three of the *ndiyaka tanda* kind, a small handful of the little 'flakes', and three 'apricots'. The last I could well have done without (as I have said, I did not like them) and they were so big that my conscience always worried me at such a large theft. I passed the sweets out to the other two and then had to wriggle my way out again. This was always somehow more difficult because I was afraid of being caught by James if I couldn't get out. The thought of my punishment at the hands of two lots of parents was terrifying to contemplate! But I never was caught. We used to flee to the river and hide there to eat our ill-gotten gains.

There was in the shop one particular thing that filled me with longing. It was a square wooden box with a sliding top. It contained, standing on end, chalks in lovely pale colours. Once I had somehow acquired a penny and bought one of these wonderful things. There came a day when Uncle Alec Rennie, senior partner in the Rennie Shipping Line, came to spend the day. My father made us show him how we had been taught to box – in my father's boxing gloves. The match being over, Uncle Alec slipped us each half a crown. This was such wealth that it was worthy of being put in the bank. But I refused and ran the mile to the shop and came home as one in a dream with the whole box of chalks. My mother gave me a drawing book with black paper on which the chalks showed up beautifully. And my father drew a large picture of a sailing ship on the wall of the nursery. It was a lovely picture and caused us great delight. I was very proud that my chalks had been used for such a grand purpose. This occurred shortly after Gwen Blackman had come on a visit and I had discovered the wonder of painting pictures. I regret that I do not own one of her paintings. It was after I watched her painting that I decided I wanted one day to be a great painter! My mother's teaching of the Italian Renaissance was equally inspiring. But by the time I was eight years old, I became keener on modelling. There was very good clay to be found in most of the streams, so there was no difficulty in supplying the materials for this form of art. My greatest success from this early beginning was when I had a stone carving selected for the South African exhibit at the Sao Paulo Biennale, and the following year another carving for the Venice Biennale!

## The Baca women

There is a place on the mountain where there is very pure red ochre. There was a deep *donga* – in parts a tunnel – and the Baca women used to come over to collect the ochre for their hair, faces and blankets. In my early youth, the women's skirts – they did not wear tops – were made from beautifully braided cowskin. They were very soft and stank to high heaven, being coated in fat and rubbed with red ochre. Their hair was done up in long tassles of twisted hair also coated in fat and ochre. It hung down almost over the eyes in front and was about shoulder-length at the sides and back. They sometimes wore a blanket over their shoulders in winter.

We children were very much afraid of the Bacas as they had at one time been cannibals, and to this day have an annual festival, *ncube*, at which cannibalistic rites are performed, and it is dangerous for strangers to be found alone there at that time. I was very much afraid that I might be caught and eaten by these women as they walked past on their way to or from Bacaland. One day I was riding my newly acquired scooter down the hill from the house and did not see two Baca women approaching right in front of me. Before I could stop myself, I found myself buried in a red skirt. The smell was so breathtaking that I could not scream as I wanted to do. The women kindly set me back on my feet with comforting words but, dragging my scooter, I fled wailing in terror. I had difficulty understanding the Baca language which is akin to that of their relatives, the Swazis. The 't' sound is pronounced as 'tsi', which sounds strange. An 'f' could also be pronounced 'pf'. If a herd boy came to speak to me, I had quite often to have an interpreter.

## Farm buildings

My father had a large stone kraal, thatched along one side, built next to the old kraal which was made of sods. The new kraal was built of roughly squared blue ironstone. Some of the stones were very large. The walls stood about six feet high and were wide enough to walk along. The builder, whose name I do not remember, said he did not mind how large the stones were that were brought down on the sledge, and he certainly included some mighty ones in those walls. There was to have been an extension to this kraal at the front, and the walls at the corners were extended forwards, but this work was never completed.

Huts or rondavels were built of sods. Big One was the usual builder and thatcher. The sods are cut from an area where the *vaal* ground is a mixture of sand and clay. The sods were marked out in straight lines. The spade was dug in at an angle, giving the sod the shape of a parallelogram at the ends. The grass in this type of ground was not usually very long or thick and was left on. The underside, of course, was a clear cut parallel with the ground. This shape makes the wall stronger as it gives an interlocking effect. When the walls were complete, they were plastered with a mixture of cow dung and sandy clay (pure clay would crack in hot weather). The roof trusses were erected on the ground with the centre block in the middle to hold them, and crossbars about halfway, or higher up. The 'rounders' [?] were usually made from 'monkey ropes' from the bush or growing on young trees. The thatch was cut with sickles on the Engela, where it grew about seven or eight feet high. It was only cut in the winter when it had stopped growing. It was spread out to dry completely and then tied into bundles which were carried over the mountain on women's and girls' heads.

Our nursery hut, which was built onto the west side of the house, was about eighteen feet in diameter, had bluestone foundations and a yellow-wood floor. It had a door from the small front room and two

sash windows, which were later enlarged and casement windows put in their place. This was a lovely room, especially favoured in hailstorms as the rest of the house with its corrugated iron roof was extremely noisy! It also had the advantage of all sod and thatched huts in that it stayed warm in winter and was cool in summer. This hut was completed just before my fourth birthday.

### **Griquas – expert builders and sawyers**

Square buildings built of sods were inclined to fall down – mainly owing to the inability of the black builders to build a square instead of a circle! So bricks were more popular for square buildings. The Griqua brickmakers used to be sent for and would choose the site – similar to that used for sod making – and set to work to make the bricks. This entailed the carting of considerable amounts of water in milk cans. The bricks were made from the sandy clay and water and poured into wooden forms. They were set out in rows to dry in the sun and then built into a kiln. The length of the kiln depended on the number of bricks required. The kiln was plastered with ‘dagga’.<sup>73</sup> Large logs of wood laid over smaller sticks, placed in turn on tinder, were put inside the hollow kiln and the fire lit. It had to be a slow-burning fire so as not to heat the bricks too fast and crack them. After the firing, the kiln was left to cool completely and then opened. The outer bricks were the softest and the inner ones very hard. The Griqua brickmakers were experts at their job. They were also very good builders and carpenters.

The other trade in which the Griquas were employed was that of sawyers. When we needed planks, a suitable yellow-wood was located in the bush and the sawyers sent for. They would fell the tree to lie crosswise on the steep slope. It was then sawn into the required lengths, a platform built out on stilts, and the logs rolled onto this. The outer edge of one side was sawn off and this side, fixed with wedges to lie on top, was marked into planks by a string rubbed in charcoal. The long, two-handed saw was worked by one man standing above the log and the other underneath the platform. The saw was pulled, not pushed. The finished planks had finally to be carried out of the bush and over the mountain by the women – sometimes two to a plank. A sledge pulled by a span of oxen was also sometimes used. These planks were stacked to dry under cover. This yellow-wood was of a very high quality, having a lovely grain and rich colour. It was used by our father for all purposes – building, making doors, mangers, pack presses for wool bales, our sailing boat and furniture, among others. There were other hardwood trees in the bush and my father used a couple of these including red pear, to make heads for his polo sticks as these were expensive to buy. There were no stinkwoods at this altitude and this wood had to be obtained from the Natal and Pondoland forests for the making of *yskas*.

### **Uncle Arthur’s new rondavel**

Arthur Stanford had been married to Eily Leary during the War. They returned to the farm in 1919 and lived for a time in the hut which had been built for him when my parents were married. Arthur decided to move to Alwyns Poort where there was already a shed and some huts. A furrow was made at the site from one of the strongest mountain springs and his new house was built, a very big rondavel, thirty feet in diameter. The side sections were partitioned off to form two bedrooms, and a passageway on the south side led to a lean-to kitchen and pantry. The front section was also cut off to form a *stoep* with a low wall – columns holding up that section of the roof. The foundations were stone and the house approached by steps in front. I remember being taken by my mother to see the roof trusses raised and I

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<sup>73</sup> Mud. ‘Pole and dagga’ huts were a commonplace a century ago.

can still recall the doubts expressed as to whether the walls would withstand the thrust of such a large roof span. The poles were very heavy and I remember one or two 'boys' were needed for each when they were lifted into position. The walls did not collapse! This only happened years later when a new owner removed the columns, which caused the roof to collapse on that side.

### **Weather – friend or foe?**

The weather, as with all farming in South Africa, played a very large part in our lives. The wet summers, with frequent thunderstorms, meant the quick growth of crops and veldt grass, but they could also cause devastating damage in just a few minutes. A bad storm on newly ploughed ground could cause major loss of topsoil and the formation of *dongas* in a countryside where flat land was not often found. Hail, of course, is the most dreaded of summer hazards and can wipe out a crop of mielies in a very short time.

The most devastating of these summer storms that I recall as a child – in 1925 – came when two storms followed closely on each other. We were at my uncle's shop, about a third of a mile from his house, when the storm started to build up on the mountain behind. We ran to the house for shelter and watched from the *stoep* as his herd of Friesland dairy cows appeared stampeding for home and cover. They were caught by the storm before reaching shelter, but fortunately none were killed.

This was the first time I saw a tornado form. The black 'snake' reached down from the clouds and an equally black column rose from the ground to meet it. It travelled at great speed and headed towards the cheese factory three miles distant. The storm then hid everything from sight. It was only hours later, when the milk cart returned, that we learned that the cheese factory and the house at Kromdraai had been swept away. The twisted up remains of the corrugated iron roofing were found about a mile away caught against the fences. This was also the first time I saw hailstones too large to fit into a tumbler. My uncle took the opportunity of collecting the ice as it flew in through the back window, and he made iced drinks!

A cyclone, known as *nkanyame* (?), is greatly dreaded by the native people. It is thought to be a very large serpent and under the control of an evil-minded witchdoctor. There was for many years in Kokstad a witchdoctor, Khotso, who claimed total control of the elements. His power was extra great in that he claimed to have power over whites as well as blacks, a claim never before known. This arose when he was accused of sheep theft by his employer, Mr Robert Scott. Khotso threatened to wipe out his crops in a hailstorm within a few days in retaliation for dismissal. His prediction was fulfilled and his reputation became unassailable. This gave him a wonderful basis for blackmail as he would send messages to any area that had had a bad storm or, in particular, a tornado, that it was he who had sent the storm in retaliation for some alleged misdeed. As he had spies throughout South Africa, it was easy to concoct evidence of some slight or misdeed against himself. He would then threaten further damage if a large fine, usually about £100, were not paid at once. This placed a great financial burden on those already suffering from the results of the storm.

### **The 'bush telegraph' really works**

It was years later that I actually heard the 'bush telegraph' working. It was the worst storm (this was one of Khotso's storms) I have ever lived through and it caused terrible damage along the Nunge and the

Mvenyani Valley. The Mvenyani River changed course in many places and the mielie lands were swept away. My sister and I managed to get over the mountain two days later to assess the damage (our parents were in Cape Town at the time). We rode down to the river which had by then subsided. As far as one could see down the valley, the people were searching the banks for drowned cattle. The descriptions of those found were being shouted from one to another up the valley. I heard one shout, growing finally near enough to be heard, describing a baby found in the mud. It was wonderful to see how fast news could travel. Any storm with as much as two inches of rain in half an hour causes all streams to turn into raging torrents, a wonderful sight to behold.

At all times of the year a sudden cold front can come up from the South Atlantic, and within half an hour the temperature drops from 80°F to just above freezing. I have known a hot morning, almost 80°F, and snow falling by mid-afternoon. If sheep have been newly shorn when this happens, losses can be heavy. Once a sheep collapses with the cold, its brain is affected and it dies; even if it recovers, it would probably have a twisted neck! Snow in winter, however, is welcomed because the subsequent thaw ensures a good soaking of the ground and a good spring growth of the grass. A blizzard on the other hand, when the snow comes and an icy gale, can cause heavy stock losses. Snow also causes the telephone wires to snap. It was too expensive to use copper wire when these long stretches of telephone wire to far-apart farms were first installed and steel wire was used instead. This contracted under the load of frozen snow and the wires would snap. The telegraph line between Cape Town and Durban (and on to Bombay) took a straight line which passed over the mountain and about a quarter of a mile from our house. This important line was always the first one to be repaired. But in the big snow of 1921 (the temperature plummeted to -22°), it was over three weeks before the snow thawed sufficiently for anyone to be able to get through and repair the line. On this occasion, a number of the iron telegraph posts themselves were snapped off about three or four feet from the ground. The telegraph line, of course, was long before the days of telephones.

### **Send for a doctor? Not unless serious; not for everyone**

To send for a doctor was something to be resorted to only in an extreme case, as it meant someone had to ride the thirty miles to Kokstad to fetch him. Old Dr Le Roux was a man of great experience, but lacked a certain modern knowledge. Not long after my parents' marriage, my mother had a miscarriage. One of the 'boys' was sent to fetch Dr Le Roux and told to hurry. This he did with such determination that he killed the horse which dropped dead as they reached Kokstad. In about 1924 Dr Hickley and his wife, Dr Mary, started a practice in Kokstad. They had had training in surgery – which was the saving of our cousin Walter Stanford.<sup>74</sup> He had complained of a bad stomach ache and his mother had duly dosed him on castor oil. When his condition worsened that night, my uncle, who possessed a Ford, set out to fetch the doctor, who arrived and instantly diagnosed a burst appendix. After an emergency operation, the balance swung this way and that, but Walter finally recovered.

Dr Hickley started a clinic next door to Arthur Stanford's farm shop at Alwyns Poort. This was a great help to the black people who otherwise had practically no hope of seeing a European doctor, and had to rely instead almost entirely on witchdoctors. This being the traditional system, it was not looked upon by them as a hardship. They did, however, regard their employers as health advisers. One frequently

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<sup>74</sup> Walter Stanford later was elected by African voters as a 'Native Representative' in the South African Parliament. He became one of my father Donald Molteno's close associates in the almost impossible job the three Native Representatives had in exposing the conditions and voicing the views of Black South Africans.



took the place of doctor or nurse. Hospital was looked upon as a place to which one only went to die and this sometimes, psychologically, resulted in death! This idea is probably still encountered in parts of the Transkei. The people in my youth were amazingly stoical and would maintain an appearance of disinterest when having wounds treated.

### **Take snakes seriously**

Snakebites were always a danger. My father's continuous caution to look where one was walking has made me very careful of long grass and rocky hillsides. The worst case of snakebite was when the man who looked after the cattle on Yenzela arrived at a gallop to say his wife had stepped on a pair of mating puff adders. Both had bitten her in the same leg. He had immediately treated her, as instructed by my father, by cutting the leg and rubbing in permanganate of potash, and applying a tourniquet. This treatment is now considered to be useless. Be that as it may, she was still alive when my father got to her, having galloped Derek most of the way over the mountain. He administered a large dose of anti-venom and they carried her back home. She suffered from ulcers in this leg for many years. *Ringhals* bites were fortunately not frequent, but there was a danger to the eyes from their ability to spit a considerable distance. The treatment is washing the eyes with milk. The puff adder usually bit when stepped on unseen in the long grass.

There are some men who are sib with the snakes. Adolphus (usually called Dolfus or Dolfazi) was a Pondo who worked for us for many years. He was one of these. He was always called for when a snake was encountered in the garden. He would calmly pick it up and, despite kinship, chop off its head. He claimed that no snake would bite him, and in any case should one do so by mistake, he was immune to their venom. I do not know if this immunity was ever tested. Barbara Miller, who grew up in the Bushveld where mambas were a great danger, recalled that her father employed a 'snake' man as guardian to his children. He, too, was able to pick up any snake, including mambas, and remove them from the children's vicinity. Barbara said he always knew if there was a snake near them.

I have never heard of a woman being sib with the snakes, but it is not unusual for a girl to be sib with the frogs. They will sit for long periods communing with a frog – whether in a state of trance or not, I could not say. According to the elders on the farm, this had been the case with Nongqawuse. They said that, on going to fetch water at the spring, she had met a frog, and as she was in duty bound to do, she had conversed with it. And it was by this frog that she was given the prophecy which led to the cattle killing of 1856.<sup>75</sup> It has always seemed strange to me that these creatures, which are looked upon as frightening and evil *ishwanu*, are accepted into people's lives in this way.

### **Horses – a large part of farm life**

Horses played a large part in farm life, even after the advent of the car. The quietening and training of a young horse that had run wild up to the age of three took time and patience. But if shut up by himself and fed, a horse accepts human company in a very short time. Once one can put a hand on the horse, it is not long before one can put on a halter and teach him to lead.

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<sup>75</sup> A turning point in Eastern Cape history in which the military power of the remaining independent Xhosa-speaking tribes was largely broken.

A good cattle pony is a lovely animal – surefooted and very intelligent. Raspberry was one of the best we've ever had. He had been hand-reared from the age of about three months and grew up in the garden, attended by a rough-haired fox terrier. He was long-legged and very fast and loved herding cattle. If a beast had to be sorted out from a herd – always a difficult job in the open – he would realise at once which beast it was to be fetched out and would latch onto it, pre-empt any sudden move to the side, and keep it going in the right direction. He would twist and turn so fast that it took a good rider to stay on him!

This sort of training meant that they were also excellent polo ponies. I believe in Argentina young polo ponies are trained in this way. Wasp, one of our two Arabs, could stop dead from a gallop and swing right about on his hindquarters on the spot. Despite his small size, he was very fast and loved playing polo. He finally grew too old for the fourteen mile trip to the club, followed by the evening walk home after three or four chukkas in the afternoon. The other horses were clipped and fed and groomed as usual, and set off for the first game of the season, but without him. Wasp followed to the first gate, where he stood all day. After two weeks he lost his appetite, his head hung down, and his coat went dull. This continued for about a month. And then an overseas visitor arrived and wanted a game. Father was asked if he could bring Wasp along as there were not enough spare horses for an extra player. Wasp seemed to know. He ate his food, and went off kicking up his heels. After that he was allowed to go and play one chukka and his life was saved. My brother, John, riding him as a very small boy, once put up a hare and away they went in hot pursuit after the white tail of the hare.

### **Animal killers – not what you might think**

Grass staggers, cirrhosis of the liver from eating ragwort, which comes up green in the spring veldt, is one of the greatest horse killers in East Griqualand. There is no prevention or treatment for this disease. In wet years there were also outbreaks of horse sickness, usually the *dikkop* variety, and a horse did not often survive this. There is now an effective vaccine against horse sickness and it is no longer so dreaded.

Another wet weather disease one had to cope with was blue tongue in sheep. Like horse sickness, it was spread by insect bites. The sheep usually recovered, but their wool was affected and would have a 'break' in it, which destroyed the strength of the fibre and was consequently downgraded.

The most common cattle diseases are tick borne. Cattle in one area work up an immunity to gall sick or red water, but animals brought in from another area will be seriously affected and often die. This can apply from farm to farm. The introduction of fortnightly dipping to control the ticks that cause East Coast fever reduced this disease. But it caused a lot of dissatisfaction in the Transkei and Zululand as people had to drive their cattle long distances every two weeks, to the detriment of their condition. And their tracks also caused erosion. It was one of the major causes of a narrowly averted war in 1914 – the other major cause was German propaganda in the Transkei!

### **Drought – 'the ever-present hazard'**

Droughts, of course, are an ever-present hazard in farming. That of 1932-33 was the worst we suffered. It came at a time when the slump was at its worst and the country was bankrupt. All South Africa's trading partners had gone off the Gold Standard and the Nationalist government refused to follow suit.

This meant that our wool etc. was too expensive for overseas buyers. The top price that could be got for first grade fleeces was four pence a pound and that did not pay the cost even of railage to Durban. The beef industry, our farm's other source of income, was in an equally hopeless state. The price of a prime slaughter ox was £4 and 10 shillings.

The drought of 1932-33 was not cushioned, as is the position now when feed can be brought from one area to another and even imported from overseas. There are special government aid schemes these days. And although the present drought<sup>76</sup> is causing a great deal of hardship and many farmers are going under, there is a certain amount of help. My father lost over sixty head of cattle during the 1932 drought – mostly young stock and calving cows. There finally came the day when he called his 'boys' to a meeting – Stone, Riempie, Dolfus, Bulu, Joseph, and others who had worked for him for less than twenty years – and told them that there was no longer any money for wages, but there were still enough mielies and milk for food. They were free to go, or to stay and have what rations there were. Eventually, the government fell, and a coalition government was formed between Hertzog and Smuts. The Gold Standard was abandoned, prices rose, and in the spring of 1933 it rained – just before the last bit of feed on the farm was used up, and the big beautiful willow tree at the bottom of the garden was next. All those willows along the river had already had their newly leafed branches cut off and fed to the cows. The vultures were well fed that year as the country was covered in carcasses. Our neighbour, John Ballantyne [?], lost most of his herd of Frieslands, which died as they calved. The people of the Transkei were in desperate straits and there must have been a great many deaths there. It was tragic to see families coming over the mountain seeking work for the sake of food. No one had food to spare for extra people. I hope this year, 1992, the government will have the funds to prevent the tragedy of those times.

### **The Black farm children**

As children, most of our companions were the black children on the farm. But tradition forbade any close friendships. The schoolroom was also the church and was situated next door to Lucy's huts. The children sat on wooden benches and wrote on slates. Children came from neighbouring farms as well, and a walk of two or three miles was not regarded as a hardship. Listening outside the door, we learned the Xhosa alphabet. I've studied her 'church book' with Lucy, who was illiterate. I still remember the opening lines, but despite the efforts I always took (and still do), it takes me a long time reading in Xhosa. It was considered a good method of teaching to beat the bad pupil in order to 'soften his head'. I recall that Sponkolo, the Tadpole, was always in trouble for cheekiness and was frequently beaten, and finally had a large stone balanced on his head as a last resort in the attempt to soften it!

Our own schooling, as I have already related, was rather sporadic. Our mother taught us to read and write at an early age. She read to us a great deal and we absorbed subjects such as history, geography, the history of art – she was keenest on the Italian Renaissance. She joined an English correspondence school and they used to send her the books and lessons monthly. The only recollection I have of these books was a reproduction of *The Fighting Temeraire*,<sup>77</sup> which pleased me greatly as I had discovered Henry Newbolt's poem about this ship and learned it off by heart. The school inspector arrived one day to see if we were being educated. He tested our reading and writing and sums, and must have been

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<sup>76</sup> Cynthia is writing her recollections in 1992.

<sup>77</sup> Turner's famous painting of a great sailing ship being towed by a steam tug to where it was to be broken up – a commentary on the huge consequences, good and bad, of the Industrial Revolution.

satisfied as he never returned. Perhaps our knowledge of French surprised him! In 1928 Janet O'Mahony was employed to teach us. And we were introduced to the exciting subjects of Maths and Latin. She was a very good teacher and I owe her a lot.

### 3. Recollections of Particular Members of the Family<sup>78</sup>

**Editor's Note:** It seems that Cynthia Payne must also have written recollections of her relatives on her father Elliot Stanford's side of the family. Unfortunately, she did not give me a copy of this prior to her death.

.... On Mum's side of the family, the proportion was unequal with her seventy-two *first* cousins. The *seconds* were too legion to be counted and extended to those members of Cape society only related by close friendship. Perhaps if one went far enough back, all Cape families<sup>79</sup> were related somewhere! On the other hand, there were many people that were not known.

#### Sir John Charles Molteno

Grandpapa, Sir John Charles Molteno,<sup>80</sup> 'the Lion of Beaufort', handed down to his family a loud and carrying voice attached to some men of large stature and a large self-importance. His two elder daughters were cast in an iron mould and ruled the family with determination and a great knowledge of right.

#### Aunt Caroline Murray

Aunt Caroline took over the mothering of her numerous brothers when their mother, Maria Jarvis, died shortly after the birth of the 14<sup>th</sup> baby.<sup>81</sup> This baby was heartlessly referred to by Uncle James [Molteno] as 'the child Caroline killed'.<sup>82</sup> She [Caroline] married Dr Murray, a ship's surgeon, who established

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<sup>78</sup> For more detail, and on occasion more accurate information, about each of these members of the family, you can go to the *People and Places* section of this website where, over time, I will be writing fuller accounts of the lives of each relative.

<sup>79</sup> Like almost all White South Africans before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Cynthia's omission of the qualifying adjective 'White' before the words 'Cape families' reflected a particular mentality. This assumed that segregation between the 'races' was total to a point where South Africans – whether of European, African, Asian or mixed ancestry – related meaningfully to others as individuals only within the social boundaries of their 'race'. Ironically, as her own recollections amply testify, Cynthia grew up in a different age where, on some farms at least, White South Africans did relate, at least during childhood, on a less racialized basis to South Africans of other groups.

<sup>80</sup> Sir John Charles Molteno died over 30 years before Cynthia was born. His daughter Maria, Cynthia's grandmother, died in 1903. And his eldest daughter, Betty Molteno, left South Africa in 1916, the year before Cynthia was born. So Cynthia only had some direct acquaintance, and as a very small child, with Sir John's daughter, Caroline, and Caroline's much younger half-sister, Minnie. The 'two elder daughters' whom Cynthia is referring here are Betty and Caroline. As for her impression of her grandfather, John Charles Molteno, this could only have come from her mother who herself may have been relaying her own mother Maria's recollections.

<sup>81</sup> Cynthia says 12<sup>th</sup> child; she is incorrect, not being aware perhaps of several of Maria's children who died very young. See *Sir John Charles Molteno's Family* on this website.

<sup>82</sup> An appalling statement by James, and utterly unfair.

himself as a GP in Kenilworth (in the Cape) and became the well known and beloved doctor of that area. They had eight children.<sup>83</sup>

### Aunt Betty Molteno

Aunt Betty never married. She became involved in education and taught for a time at the Girls' Collegiate in Port Elizabeth. It was always claimed that she started the school, but my paternal



**Maria Anderson (nee Molteno), Cynthia Stanford's grandmother, late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

grandmother was at the school prior to her being there! She was a great fighter for women's rights, for the Boers in the Boer War, and a champion and friend of Emily Hobhouse – always referred to in letters as 'dear Emily'. Adopted Olive Schreiner<sup>84</sup> and seems to have been with her in England. She was of course one of the first suffragettes.<sup>85</sup> I never met her.

### Maria Anderson (nee Molteno)

Grandma Anderson was the third daughter and I think very much under the thumb of these two powerful ladies. She brought her children up in the Molteno tradition, typified by her response to my mother when they were on a bicycle trip and a very cold southeast wind got up. My mother, Effie, complained of the cold and was told firmly that the Southeaster was a summer wind and therefore never made one cold. The Andersons and the Murrays lived next door to each other at Barkly House and Greenfield House – Claremont House<sup>86</sup> was the Molteno home. The whole of this area was covered in pine forest which formed the playground of the twelve or so children of the combined families. They grew up a hardy and independent lot. As there were only two girls (Kathleen Murray was much younger) in this crowd, they had to wear their brothers' cast-off

<sup>83</sup> Actually, nine children, one of whom died in infancy. See the Family Tree on this website.

<sup>84</sup> It is not clear what Cynthia means by 'adopted'. Olive and Betty became close friends, and political partners, during the Boer War and remained such for the rest of their lives.

<sup>85</sup> Betty Molteno was an extraordinary woman of many parts. One aspect Cynthia does not mention here is Betty's personal, as well as political, connections with various black South Africans, include John Dube, Sol Plaatje, and Mohandas Gandhi.

<sup>86</sup> Claremont House was the main house on the estate and the Molteno family home from the mid 1860s. Both Greenfield House and Barkly House were carved out of the Claremont House estate.

sailor suit tops, but with skirts not trousers.

### Uncle James Molteno



**James Molteno (as Cynthia Stanford would have remembered him), Elgin, 1927**

Uncle James Molteno was one of the large Moltenos and was for many years Speaker of the House.<sup>87</sup> I expect his voice made him a very suitable choice for this position. His wife left him and took their two daughters, Monica and Clarissa, to live in England – his eye for the ladies must have proved too much for her! He claimed that on one occasion, struggling down Strand Street in a strong Southeaster, he flung up his hand and drew down a lady by the ankle! He always carried a large white sunshade with a green lining and was preceded by an enormous beard. As the sunshade appeared over the wall on the beach side of the subway at Kalk Bay (now called Dalebrook), we all used to rush to the pool and plunge in at the deep end to avoid being captured and tickled.

### Uncle Frank Molteno

Uncle Frank was quite a different type. I think he and some of the brothers must have taken after their mother's side of the family, the Jarvises. He built an Italian-style house on the seaward side of the railway line. This house is still there and looks unchanged.<sup>88</sup> My mother was very attached to him. He was killed in the Salt River train accident when a number of leading Cape Town figures were killed. I think it was about 1926. He had two sons and two daughters. The one son was drowned fishing off the rocks at Kalk Bay,<sup>89</sup> and the other killed in a motorbike accident, I think when he was at Cambridge.<sup>90</sup>

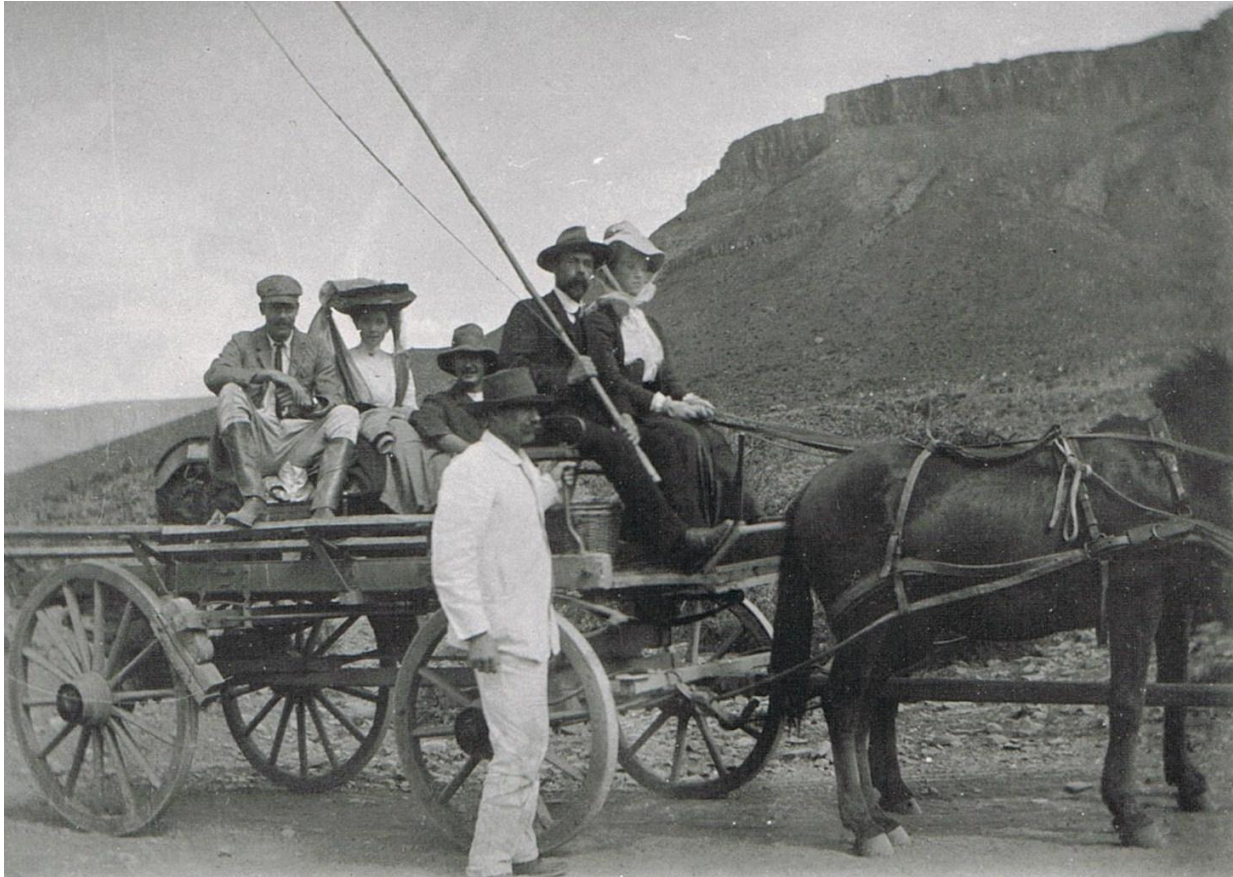
<sup>87</sup> Sir James Molteno was elected Speaker of the Cape Colony parliament after the Boer War. When the Union of South Africa was created out of the four colonies in 1910, he was elected first Speaker of the Union House of Assembly.

<sup>88</sup> Hamilton House, Italianate in design, exists to the present day. It lies squeezed between the Cape Town-Simonstown suburban railway and the sea, just a few hundred yards from what at that time was the tiny fishing village of Kalk Bay where several Moltenos and Andersons had their holiday homes.

<sup>89</sup> Frank Edmund 'Eddie' Molteno, the younger boy, was born in 1890 and drowned in 1899.



### Uncle Wallace Molteno



**Harold Anderson, Mary (X), A.Dorman, Wallace Molteno (with whip), George Jackson – the Karoo (almost all relatives of Cynthia Stanford)**

Uncle Wallace inherited (or bought?) the family farms at Beaufort West. He married a friend of my mother's, Lil Sandeman, who had come out from England on a visit.<sup>91</sup> They had a house at Kalk Bay where they used to come for the summer months to escape the Karoo heat.

### Uncle Charlie Molteno

Uncle Charlie married an American lady from South Carolina.<sup>92</sup> She was, I remember my mother saying, one of three beautiful sisters. She came on a visit to her cousin, Mrs Lindley,<sup>93</sup> where Uncle Charlie met

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<sup>90</sup> Vyvyan Molteno, the eldest boy, was born in 1889 and died on the A3 outside Petersfield in 1911. There is a moving account of the funeral his Uncle Percy Molteno organized for him at Parklands in Shere. This will be put on this website in due course.

<sup>91</sup> Cynthia's mother, Effie, and Lil Sandeman were at the same school, St Leonard's, in Scotland and became close friends. It was at Effie's invitation that Lil came out to the Cape for a 7-month long holiday, during which she met and got engaged to Wallace Molteno. You can read Lil's *Diary of my Journey to Africa, 1905-06* on this website.

and fell in love with her. He followed her back to America and won her hand. Her features were so perfect that, even in her old age, she remained beautiful. Uncle Charlie I never met, but he was famous in the House [of Assembly] for his ringing voice. He was nicknamed the God and ruled his household with a rod of iron. Their five children were Lucy, John, Carol, Peter, and Virginia. His wife, Aunt Lucy, in her later years became a prospector and spent much of her time prospecting for minerals in Namaqualand and up the West Coast as far as Angola.<sup>94</sup> She told me where there was oil in Angola, and in this she was proved right. She had a mine in Namaqualand where they mined one of the rare minerals. She bought an early type of Land Rover and went on long trips with the driver until she was over eighty. She always looked a perfectly dressed lady and was never seen abroad without a hat. Even when she was very old and more or less confined to her room, she did not receive visitors unless wearing her boudoir cap, usually beautifully made by Carol<sup>95</sup> with whom she was living.

### Uncle Barkly Molteno

Uncle Barkly was the youngest of the sons of Maria Molteno (nee Jarvis). He was interested in boats, so was shipped off to Dartmouth in England at a very early age, and spent all his life in the Royal Navy. He was very good-looking. He married Aunt Ethel (a widow with a son<sup>96</sup> who became a monk), whose sister, Hilda, had married Barkly's nephew, Dr Kenah Murray.<sup>97</sup> Aunt Ethel did not approve of South Africa which resulted in their becoming rather cut off from the family. Uncle Barkly commanded H.M.S. *Warrior*, which was sunk in the Battle of Jutland.<sup>98</sup> He retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral. When we went to visit them at Farnham, we liked him very much, but were amused by Aunt Ethel, in a purple hat, who, when speaking of him to us, always referred to him as 'the Admiral'. They had one daughter, Viola, of my age, who was captured by the Japanese in 1942 and spent years in a concentration camp.

### Uncle Percy Molteno

Uncle Percy went into the shipping business. He married Bessie Currie, the daughter of Sir Donald Currie, the founder of the Castle Shipping Company that later amalgamated with the Anderson-owned Union Line, which were the first mail boats. They lived in Park Lane<sup>99</sup> in London, where he had a

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<sup>92</sup> Charlie Molteno married Lucy Lindley Mitchell in 1897. You can read her autobiographical recollections, *What a Strange is Memory*, on this website.

<sup>93</sup> In actual fact, Lucy's mother, Mrs Lindley Mitchell, had come to the Cape in order to see her brother, Bryant Lindley, who was living there.

<sup>94</sup> This is really rather amazing. Lucy Molteno may never have found oil herself in Angola half a century and more ago, but the country is today the second largest oil exporter in Africa!

<sup>95</sup> Carol Williamson (nee Molteno), one of Charlie and Lucy's three daughters. You can read Carol's *Recollections of My Life* on this website.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Batley. His extraordinary story – fighting at Gallipoli during the First World War and then becoming a Roman Catholic monk in gratitude to God for sparing his life – will be told on this website in due course.

<sup>97</sup> Dr Kenah Murray, eldest son of Caroline and Charles Murray, also fought in the First World War. His *War Diaries* will shortly appear on this website.

<sup>98</sup> Barkly Molteno's account of his part in the Battle of Jutland during the First World War will be made available on this website.

<sup>99</sup> Not quite correct. Percy and Bessie Molteno's London home was No. 10 Palace Court, a hundred yards north of Kensington Gardens, and so round the corner from Park Lane.

wonderful collection of Turner's paintings as well as a great many other treasures. He also owned a very early Rolls-Royce, which was specially fitted out to accommodate Aunt Bessie's lame leg (this was the sad result of her father throwing her up to catch her as a baby and dropping her). My mother, who went to St Leonards School at St Andrews in Scotland, was left in Uncle Percy's charge when her mother came home. I do not know why mother fell foul of Aunt Bessie, but she refused to return to her house and her elder brother, Ernest,<sup>100</sup> had to look after her [in the school holidays]. This entailed buying her a winter outfit every year – i.e. a coat and skirt. He had only one criterion for the choice of this garment – it had to be thick enough to stand up by itself! They also bought a silver hand mirror as a birthday present for their mother – this I still have!

### **Uncle Victor Molteno**

I know nothing about him except that he was a doctor.

### **Grandpa Molteno (Sir John Charles Molteno)'s 3<sup>rd</sup> wife, Minnie, and her family**

Grandpapa Molteno married a third wife (the first having died in childbirth, as did the baby) – Minnie Blenkins. They had four children – Ted, Clifford, Harry and little Minnie. These great uncles of mine were contemporaries of my mother and her uncles. I knew them well. Uncle Ted was a man of great brilliance. While at Cambridge he was interested in law and medicine, so decided to take his degree in both. However, in his, I think, final year of medicine, he disagreed with one of the professors – he did not tell me what the disagreement was about; and gave up that side of his studies.

Uncle Harry did not have his brilliance, but was an outstanding linguist and classical student.

### **Uncle Clifford Molteno**

Uncle Clifford was a man with sparks of brilliance, and, as Carol<sup>101</sup> put it, 'narrowly missed being a genius'. His world was not that of other people. He qualified as a lawyer and once stood for Parliament, much to my mother's dismay as she was expected to be his aide. He knew the mountains of the Peninsula<sup>102</sup> probably better than anyone else of his time. He published a book of poems. When I knew him, he lived on his small farm – run by his brothers – at Elgin. Here he was perfectly happy and his eccentricities worried no one. The house had a bathroom and, while he was away on one occasion, Uncle Ted decided to install a bath in this room. When Clifford returned, he was most upset as he said he would now have nowhere to roller-skate. His unique method of keeping warm was to sit within a circle of candles. He was always nervous of losing his possessions – by theft or fire – and kept stores of supplies buried under one of the oak trees that surrounded his house. He never looked very well fed.

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<sup>100</sup> Dr Ernest Anderson, Effie's elder brother, joined the Household Cavalry as a British Army surgeon. He also served throughout the First World War on the Western Front. His descriptions of the four years he served in France will appear shortly on this website.

<sup>101</sup> Carol Williamson (nee Molteno), a first cousin of Effie's.

<sup>102</sup> The Cape Peninsula, with its spine of mountains along its 30 mile length from Cape Town to Cape Point.



**Clifford Molteno as a young man at the University of Cambridge, very early 1900s**

Uncle Clifford was a delightful man who never harmed man or beast. He was overjoyed when a leopard took up its abode in his oak thicket. He said it liked eating cats but always left the tails hanging in the trees. This was investigated by his nephew, John Molteno, and found to be true! He died, mainly from shock, after turning his car over on the way to visit his brothers. He owned a car for many years and arrived at Glen Elgin<sup>103</sup> one day very excited at a new discovery. He had got his car into an inextricable position and was sadly gazing at it when a neighbour suggested he should reverse out, and demonstrated how to do this phenomenal thing.

### **Uncles Ted and Harry Molteno**

Uncles Ted and Harry, on returning from their years at Cambridge,<sup>104</sup> bought the farm of Glen Elgin at Elgin.<sup>105</sup> Here they started in a small way, growing oats on poor soil and hilly fields. Peaches did very well in this type of soil and [with its] climate of hot summers and very cold winters. Being a man of big ideas, Uncle Ted saw great prospects in this, and after the First World War they started exporting peaches to England. The peaches were shipped from Cape Town

docks and the industry grew, with the result that the government decided to establish refrigerated sheds at the docks. But in their ignorance they froze the fruit with the result that the peaches arrived in England looking lovely but with a consistency of cotton wool. This wrecked the reputation of South African peaches. Uncle Ted brought a case for damages against the government. This lawsuit dragged on

<sup>103</sup> His brothers, Ted and Harry Molteno's, farm.

<sup>104</sup> Seven of Sir John Charles Molteno's sons and daughters were educated at the University of Cambridge, as well numerous of his grandchildren. John himself had had to leave school aged fifteen, following the premature death of his father and the consequent necessity of helping support his mother and younger brothers and sisters.

<sup>105</sup> Elgin is an upland valley surrounded by mountains some 35 miles from Cape Town. It became the place where several members of the Molteno and Murray families started farming just after 1900. Three generations of the family, led by Ted and Harry, have contributed hugely to developing the valley's massive apple and deciduous fruit export business.





**Harry and Ted Molteno (with Con Pare), Glen Elgin, 1940s (as they were when Cynthia stayed with them)**

for years and Uncle Ted finally lost it. When things began to go wrong, he offered his lawyer some strychnine (as a stimulant)!

Kathleen Murray, their niece, also farmed at Elgin and also started growing fruit, instead of keeping bees and pigs as she had been doing.<sup>106</sup> She said it was she who first thought apples would be a better export fruit than peaches, and not Uncle Ted. In this argument I would not dream of taking sides and it probably was a mutually generated idea. However this may be, the apple industry of Elgin started and grew to its now enormous proportions. Harry was a very good organiser and became an expert on apples. The two brothers were an excellent combination, Uncle Ted with his large and inspired ideas and Harry the practical man able to put them into execution. They bought up large tracts of ground at Elgin and even as far afield as Genadendal and Touws River.<sup>107</sup> Their undertaking became the largest privately owned fruit farm in the world.

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<sup>106</sup> Kathleen Murray was the younger daughter of Dr Charles and Caroline Murray. A remarkable woman, there is a lovely description of her pioneering fruit growing exploits by Marion Cran in her *The Gardens of Good Hope*. This will be posted on this website shortly.

<sup>107</sup> Touws River is on the edge of the Karoo. Genadendal (the Valley of Grace, or Mercy) is mainly renowned for as the Moravian mission station that served the local Coloured population.

### **Ted's generosity**

Uncle Ted loved being spontaneously generous. On one of my mother's visits to Cape Town, she arranged a lunch at Stuttaford's with the uncles and some of their oldest friends.<sup>108</sup> At the end of lunch, Elsie Buchanan,<sup>109</sup> who was rather hard up, announced that she wanted to buy a new winter coat. They all accompanied her to the ladies' coat department and Elsie asked to see some moderately priced coats. When they came Uncle Ted said they were dreadful - 'Bring something better.' Elsie waffled and protested. However, when the 'better' came, Uncle Ted again turned them down with scorn. Elsie became more agitated when the third lot was discarded and she was in despair. However, Uncle Ted continued to scorn them and said only fur coats would be good enough. And one of these, he approved. Of course, poor Elsie was now totally in despair, wailing 'Ted, I can't afford this sort of thing', to which he replied, 'Of course you can', produced his cheque-book and bought the fur coat. I have often wondered what Elsie did with this so unsuitable garb for her rather humble way of living!

### **Mules or Tractors?**

Shortly after the War,<sup>110</sup> an optimistic young man arrived at the farm and attempted to sell a Ferguson tractor to the uncles. This was a new type of venture and practically unheard of. The young man did his best and seemingly made no progress. Finally he was about to depart when Uncle Ted said, 'Well, that will be all right, bring me five next week'.

Uncle Ted had a passion for Lincoln cars. When one showed signs of age, it would be moved to a side garage and a new one purchased. He never traded in a car as they were looked on as part of his family and, when too worn out, would be taken to his car 'graveyard'. I wonder if there are still any valuable old cars left there.

The uncles all rode motorbikes in my early youth. Uncle Ted was always a danger to other traffic. He once had a puncture in the back wheel of his motorbike which was parked in Kimberley Road at Kalk Bay. He set to to mend the puncture, but dropped all his tools down the storm-water drain which had a grill over it. All attempts to retrieve the tools failed until Mother thought of me. I was flattened on the grill and my arm squeezed through. With a great stretching effort, I finally got the tools out. I must have been six years old at that time.

### **Luminal and the dangers of self-medication**

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<sup>108</sup> Stuttafords was for many years Cape Town's premier department store.

<sup>109</sup> Elsie Buchanan (nee Lindley) was a kind of relative. She was the daughter of Bryant Lindley, who was the uncle of Lucy Lindley Molteno, Charlie Molteno's American wife. Bryant, whose father Daniel Lindley had been an early American missionary to the Zulus in the 1840s, was born in Natal and, on growing up, decided to live in South Africa.

<sup>110</sup> The Second World War, 1939-45. Mechanization of farming only really got under way in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.





**Harry Molteno with his beloved sheepdog, mid**

relations. One day he was strongly criticising someone and turned to me for agreement. I, however, said I did not like criticising people, whereupon he burst out laughing and said I was the greatest critic he had.

The uncles, in their large way, each owned a very big (and very smelly) English sheepdog. These dogs were each given an enormous bone every evening and these they ate before the fire. One evening a

Unfortunately Uncle Ted's medical knowledge led to the disastrous result that he liked to prescribe for himself and began to use Luminal to calm himself down at night.<sup>111</sup> He finally became addicted to this drug. He was taking about five grains every night to help himself sleep. This affected him physically and mentally. He had always had a quick temper, but now, if roused to anger by anything, would become totally possessed. These episodes were very frightening and only Uncle Harry could deal with them. His kidneys were finally also affected by the drugs. He had a prostate operation; the hospital refused him the Luminal because of his kidneys – disregarding the withdrawal symptoms, and he flew into an enraged state and had a stroke,<sup>112</sup> which was fatal.

I stayed with them for some time and often visited them. I always got on very well with them. Uncle Ted and I had some great arguments, which we both used to enjoy very much. He was inclined to be very critical of people – especially of his

<sup>111</sup> Luminal, according to the website <http://www.webmd.com>, is a barbiturate used as a short-term treatment (no more than two weeks) for sleeplessness and the relief of tension, and on a longer term basis for the control of seizures. It can become addictive and sudden withdrawal, especially where it has been used for a long period, can trigger a seizure and even death.

<sup>112</sup> This account of Cynthia's throws important light on one side of Ted Molteno's personality. He was always a hugely energetic, forceful, not to say domineering, man. He also got into disputes and bad-tempered exchanges with other members of the family. In the light of what Cynthia tells us here of his use of Luminal, it seems entirely possible that this unattractive aspect of Ted's behaviour may have been caused, at least in part, by his use of this drug.



fight over the bones broke out in the midst of where we sat. I took shelter on a bench on one side but with wild shouts the uncles joined in, each seizing his large armchair and hurling it at the dogs. It was the best dog fight I have ever attended. There was a large sofa in the room, and to their delight one evening they moved it for some reason and out from under its seat a shower of old bones descended – the remains of the dogs' bones stored there by rats! They considered it a very good thing that there had not been an outbreak of plague.

They decided to build a very big cold storage plant near the railway station. This was considered by the experts to be an impossible project as no such sized cold store had been built anywhere in the world. However the work was given to their engineer, Mr Griffiths, and the store was built and proved totally successful. Since then more and bigger cold stores have been built, two of them by the uncles.

### **Marriage forbidden**

Uncle Ted maintained that there was mental instability in the family and would not allow any of his brothers and sister to marry. This was very bad luck on Uncle Harry who would have loved to marry his 'girlfriend' and have a home and family. He used to visit her regularly in town, but they never married.<sup>113</sup>

The uncles were very interested in and keen on Tolstoy and his ideas of free love. They joined a community organised by him in Holland. This was before they returned to South Africa to start farming.

I got a great deal of joy out of the uncles and they were very generous to me. In fact without them and their help, we would not have had the money to buy the ground and build our home at Lakeside.

### **Great-Great-Grandpa Hercules Jarvis and his family**

Great-great-grandpa Hercules Jarvis<sup>114</sup> was a nephew or cousin of Admiral Jarvis, later Lord St Vincent.<sup>115</sup> He came to the Cape with an officer in the 'train' of Lord Charles Somerset, Governor at the time of the first British Occupation.<sup>116</sup> Hercules was at this stage very young. He returned to England at the end of the Occupation, but went back later when the Cape was re-occupied. He became involved in the wine trade and married Maria Vos, whose father and brother were silversmiths. The Vos's were descended from Olaf Berg, the Swedish Commander of the Castle at the time of Simon van der Stel.<sup>117</sup> The Jarvisses lived at Somerset House in Somerset Road where Great Grandpa could be near the docks and could

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<sup>113</sup> Neither Ted nor any of his three brothers and sisters married. This was in stark contrast to their 10 half-brothers and sisters, all of whom except for Betty married and had children.

<sup>114</sup> Hercules Jarvis was the father of Maria and, when she married John Charles Molteno, became his father in law, despite the not very great difference in age between the two men. It is from the 10 children of this marriage who reached adulthood that all of us in the Molteno and its related families in South Africa are descended. You can read Dr R F M Immelman's draft biography of Hercules Jarvis on this website.

<sup>115</sup> Admiral Jarvis won a famous victory over the French fleet off Cape St Vincent and, had it not been for his premature death in another engagement, would have been regarded as one of the most famous naval commanders.

<sup>116</sup> British forces seized the Cape from the Dutch early on (1795) during the Napoleonic Wars. After briefly returning it to Dutch control, Britain seized it again in 1806 and this occupation was made permanent and the Cape became a British colony on 1814.

<sup>117</sup> The Castle at Cape Town was built by the Dutch in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century as the military headquarters of their new victualling station at the tip of Africa.



**Hercules Crosse Jarvis, mid 1880s**

keep close contact with the ships and the trade with the Far East in which he was involved. Great Grandma spoke only Dutch and the family occupied their own pew in the Dutch Reformed Church in Adderley Street. Their grandchildren said they were afraid of the Andreith Lions on the lectern! When all the slaves were freed, the family slaves stayed on as part of the family for the rest of their lives.<sup>118</sup>

A messenger arrived from the docks one day to say that Mr Jarvis's widowed daughter, Annie Blenkins, was on board with her children. The ship was returning from India where her husband had died. The little family – the mother and her two children<sup>119</sup> – were of course at once adopted into the family at Somerset House. Her two sons, Willie and Bassett, were very small. Their father had been in the Indian Army and was returning to England with his two daughters, Margaret and Minnie, after the death of his first wife, when he met Annie Jarvis in Cape Town, presumably when being entertained at Somerset House while the ship was in port. Annie was seventeen when she married and went to India. It was only two years later that her husband died. Bassett was born prematurely.

Apart from Annie, Hercules Jarvis's children were Sophie (who married Uncle Alport and they lived for a long time in Beaufort West), Maria (who married John Charles Molteno), Elizabeth (who married James Bisset), and Emmie. Emmie never married and after her parents died, she and Annie lived together. After Annie died, Emmie lived alone with her cook Margaret and a maid, whose name I forget, in India Road in Claremont. She was the only member of her family that I knew. I remember her as a little old lady, in Victorian clothes, who was loved by everyone. She had a slight Cape Dutch accent, a slight rounding of the vowels and heaviness of some consonants. This speech is associated in my mind with great gentleness and concern for other people, a sort of secure background in the homes of all the old people of my early youth. Rather dark and overfull rooms with heavy curtains, large furniture, and the

<sup>118</sup> The British Parliament passed legislation to free all slaves in the Empire from 1834, but for a few years slaves were reclassified as apprentices and forced to work for their former owners as bonded labourers.

<sup>119</sup> Annie also brought her two little stepchildren, Margaret and Minnie Blenkins, with her. Minnie grew up in the Cape and eventually became John Charles Molteno's third wife in the mid 1870s. There seems to be no information about what happened to Margaret Blenkins. Their mother, Annie, never remarried.

smell of beeswax polish. There never seemed to be hurry or flurry, though there must have been crises of which children were unaware. Figs and watermelon *konfyt* are also somehow part of that past.

After the death of his wife, Grandpa Jarvis lived with Aunt Sophie and Uncle Alport. All the family silver and treasures were sold and vanished with the sale of Somerset House. Only a few pieces of the Vos silver were bought back by Aunt Caroline.

## William Anderson

William Anderson came from Sligo in Ireland.<sup>120</sup> The family were reputed to have come originally from Northumberland or the Scottish border country – and Mother always declared we must be descended from border cattle thieves! He married Maria Deane and came out to the Cape as agent for their trading company. I think their headquarters were originally in Belfast, but at a later stage their ships sailed from Liverpool. Grandfather John Deane was the founder of the company and his son, also John, was the brother of Maria. Among his letters there is one dated 14 April 1845:

‘My Dear Uncle  
Your kind letter of 24 December came to hand a few days since and by the same  
Conveyance I had one from [...] giving me an account of the death of my brother  
Charles.’

From these letters it appears that ‘Uncle’ was an Anderson and a senior member of the company.

Probably at the death of John Deane, William Anderson and one of his captains, Murison, went into partnership and formed the Anderson Murison shipping company. Murison went to Boston to buy ships for the company. This accounts for the old office clock which I have and which was made in Boston.

William Anderson became a very rich man and bought a large estate at Rondebosch. Erinville House was a lovely place. The gardens and grounds covered ten acres. The gardener was an Englishman and had his house on the estate. William and Maria had ten children – four girls, then two boys, and finally more girls. The boys were my grandfather Thomas Johnson Anderson, and his brother William Anderson who married Violet Tilney when he was about sixty years old. He [William Anderson?] died about the time his [only?] son, William Deane Anderson, was born.

Grandpa Thomas Johnson Anderson married [Miss Baker, his first wife]. They had one son, William Deane Anderson [i.e. Willie Anderson]. Willie’s mother died when he was born. Grandpa Anderson then married Maria Molteno, the third daughter of John Charles Molteno. They had two sons – Ernest Deane Anderson and Harold Molteno Anderson, and one daughter, Evangeline (Effie) Anderson. Effie was born in 1886. She married my father, Walter Elliot Stanford, who was born in 1884. They were married in 1914.

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<sup>120</sup> This whole account of the Andersons here is somewhat muddling. I have tried to sort it out, but there may be errors that have crept in.

## The Blackburns

The only descendants of the Anderson daughters that I knew well were the Blackburns,<sup>121</sup> children of the second eldest girl. [They were] Lillian, Grace, and Minnie ([who married a] Rankin and lived in England), and three boys. The eldest boy I never knew. He was killed on Table Mountain (a suspected suicide) and left two daughters, unmarried. Harry Blackburn [**Editor:** presumably a brother of the eldest boy] managed his estate. The family were always hard up. Lillian and Grace never married. Lillian and Mom were close friends. They went on a trip through Basutoland in 1912, with a police escort from Butabuta to Mont aux Sources. Sadly the magnificent photographs they took of this expedition were destroyed when the house at Inungi was burnt down. Lillian was a nurse during the First World War. She was still nursing during the flu epidemic [of 1918] and very nearly died from this disease – her lungs were affected.

The Blackburns lived at the Boulders beyond Simonstown. Uncle Alfred, their father, used to ride a lot and used the old route from the top of Red Hill to Fish Hoek where Judy and I also used to ride. He was stopped once in his old age with his coat on fire from his pipe, which I suppose he had put in his pocket as he rode along. Their mother is to me only a tall, thin, white clad figure at the foot of the staircase.

After their parents died, Grace and Lillian sold the house and moved to Kenilworth to be nearer their friends.

Minnie had three daughters – Rosemary, I forget the name of the second, and Pauline who was on a trip to the Norwegian fjords when the First World War broke out and they managed to get a boat straight back to Cape Town where Pauline spent the next five years. She was sent to school at Herschel.

Harry Blackburn worked for the shipping company.<sup>122</sup> He was a worshipper at the feet of Mammon! He was in some way involved in the finalising of Uncle William Anderson's estate. The house at St James was sold by auction, unadvertised for a song. Vio and Bill<sup>123</sup> were left with very little to live on. Harry also dealt with the estate of the last remaining Anderson aunts. He married Marjorie Lindley.<sup>124</sup> About 1922 he bought Eikenhof at Elgin. He still retained his shipping interests and was a very successful businessman. Harry and Marjorie had only one child, Elizabeth, who was a Downes syndrome child. Harry refused to accept that she was a hopeless idiot and took her to a doctor in England who was a follower of a Russian doctor, who claimed that he could cure Mongolism by treatment with a gland (what gland I know not) injection. The poor child suffered these painful injections for years.

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<sup>121</sup> Cynthia's account of the Blackburns is also somewhat unclear to me. Again, there may be mistakes. It appears that the second eldest sister of Cynthia's grandfather, Thomas Johnson Anderson, married someone called Blackburn. And that they had six children who were therefore Tom Anderson's nieces and nephews, and so first cousins of Effie Anderson (Cynthia's mother).

<sup>122</sup> Presumably the Anderson Murison Shipping Company.

<sup>123</sup> Vio must be Violet Tilney, William Anderson's widow. Bill is probably her and William's son, William Deane Anderson (referred to above).

<sup>124</sup> Harry and Marjorie Blackburn are related to the extended Molteno family, therefore, in two ways – via the Andersons (Tom Anderson having married Maria Molteno) and the Lindleys (Marjorie being a niece of Lucy Molteno).





**Harry Blackburn and Marjorie Lindley at their wedding with Alice Stanford, Effie Stanford (sitting), Inanda Lindley, and Gwen - 1925**